

we made it for *ourselves*; and why then do we boast? Note, Self is the great idol that all the world worships in contempt of God and his sovereignty.

2. The course God will take with this proud man to humble him. He is a great dragon in the waters, and God will accordingly deal with him, *ver. 4, 5.* (1.) He will draw him out of his rivers, for he has a *hook and a cord* for this *leviathan*, with which he can manage him, tho' none on earth can, *Job xli. 1. I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers*; will cast thee out of thy palace, out of thy kingdom, out of all those things in which thou takest such a complacency, and placest such a confidence. Herodotus relates of this Pharaoh, who was now king of Egypt; that he had reigned in great prosperity for 25 years, and was so elevated with his successes, that he said, *God himself could not cast him out of his kingdom*; but he shall soon be convinced of his mistake, and what he depended on shall be no defence, God can force men out of that in which they are most secure and easy. (2.) *All his fish* shall be drawn out with him, his servants, his soldiers, and all that had a *dependence on him*, as he thought, but really such as he had *dependence upon*; these shall *stick to his scales*, adhere to their king, resolving to live and die with him. But, (3.) The king and his army, the dragon and all the fish that stick to his scales shall perish together; as fish cast upon dry ground, and shall be *meat to the beasts and fowls*, *ver. 5.* Now this is supposed to have its accomplishment soon after, when this Pharaoh in defence of Arius king of Libya who had been expelled his kingdom by the Cyrenians, levied a great army, and went out against the Cyrenians to re-establish his friend, but was defeated in battle, and all his forces put to flight, which gave such disgust to his kingdom, that they rose in rebellion against him. Thus was he left *thrown into the wilderness*, *he and all the fish of the river* with him. Thus issues mens pride and presumption, and carnal security. Thus men justly lose what they might call their own *under God*, when they call it their own *against him*.

3. The ground of the controversy God has with the Egyptians; it is because they have cheated his people, they encouraged them to expect relief and assistance from them when they were in distress, but failed them, *ver. 6, 7. because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel*; they pretended to be a *staff* for them to lean upon, but when any stress was laid upon them, they were either *weak and could not*, or treacherous and *would not*, do that for them that was expected. They *broke under them*, to their great disappointment, and amazement, so that they *rent their shoulder*, and *made all their loins to be at a stand*. The king of Egypt, it is probable, had encouraged Zedekiah to break his league with the king of Babylon, with a promise that he would stand by him, which when he failed to do, to any purpose, it could not but put them into a great consternation. God had told them long since that the Egyptians were broken reeds, *Isa. xxx. 6, 7.* Rabshakeh had told them so, *Isa. xxxvi. 6.* and now they found it so. It was indeed the folly of Israel to trust them, and they were well enough served when they were deceived in them. God was righteous in suffering them to be so. But that is no excuse at all for the Egyptians' falshood and treachery, nor shall it secure them from the judgments of that God who is and will be the avenger of all such wrongs. It is a great sin, and very provoking to God, as well as unjust, ungrateful, and very dishonourable and unkind, to put a cheat upon those that put a confidence in us.

8. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee. 9. And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste, and they shall know that I am the LORD; because he hath said, The river is mine, and I have made it. 10. Behold therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia. 11. No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years. 12. And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 13. ¶ Yet thus saith the Lord GOD, At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither they were scattered. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation, and they shall be there a base kingdom. 15. It shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations. 16. And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their

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iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

This explains the foregoing prediction which was figurative, and looks something further. Here is a prophecy,

1. Of the ruin of Egypt. The threatening of this is very full and particular; and the sin for which this ruin shall be brought upon them is their pride, *ver. 9.* they said, *The river is mine, and I have made it*; therefore their land shall spue them out. (1.) God is against them, both against the king, and against the people, *against thee, and against thy rivers*, waters signify *people and multitudes*, *Rev. xvii. 15.* (2.) Multitudes of them shall be cut off by the sword of war, a sword which God will bring upon them, to destroy *both man and beast*, the sword of a civil war. (3.) The country shall be *desolated*. The *land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste*, *ver. 9.* the country not cultivated, the cities not inhabited; the wealth of both was their pride, and that God will take away. It shall be *utterly waste*; *wastes of waste* (so the margin reads it) and *desolate*, *ver. 10. neither men nor beasts shall pass through it, nor shall it be inhabited*, *ver. 11.* it shall be *desolate in the midst of the countries that are so*, *ver. 12.* This was the effect not so much of those wars spoken of before, which were made by them, but of the war which the king of Babylon made upon them: It shall be desolate from one end of the land to the other, *from the tower of Syene even to the borders of Ethiopia*. The sin of pride is enough to ruin a whole nation. (4.) The people shall be *dispersed* and scattered among the nations, *ver. 12.* so that they who thought the balance of power was in their hand, should now become a contemptible people: Such a fall doth a *haughty spirit go before*.

2. Of the restoration of Egypt after a while, *ver. 13.* Egypt shall lie *desolate forty years*, *ver. 12.* and then *I will bring again the captivity of Egypt*, *ver. 14.* Some date the forty years from Nebuchadnezzar's destroying Egypt, others from the desolation of Egypt some time before, however they end about the first year of Cyrus, when the seventy years captivity of Judah ended, or soon after. Then this prediction was accomplished, (1.) That God will gather the Egyptians out of all the countries into which they were dispersed, and make them to *return to the land of their habitation*, and give them a settlement there again, *ver. 14.* Note, Though God will find out a way to humble the proud, yet he will not contend for ever, no, not with them in this world. (2.) That yet they shall not make a figure again as they have done. Egypt shall be a *kingdom* again, but it shall be the *basest of the kingdoms*, *ver. 15.* it shall have but little wealth and power, and shall not extend its conquests as formerly; shall be the tail of the nations, and not the head. It is a mercy that it shall become a kingdom again, but to humble it, it shall be a despicable kingdom; it shall be a long time before it recover any thing like its ancient lustre. For two reasons it shall be thus mortified.

(1.) That it may not domineer over its neighbours, that it may not *exalt itself above the nations*, nor *rule over the nations* as it has done, but that it may know what it is to be low and despised. Note, Those who abuse their power will justly be stripped of it; and God, as King of nations, will find out a way to maintain the injured rights and liberties, not only of his own but other nations.

(2.) That it may not deceive the people of God, *ver. 16.* *It shall no more be the confidence of the house of Israel*, they shall no more be in temptation to trust in it, as they have done, which is a sin that *brings their iniquity to remembrance*, i. e. provokes God to punish them not for that only, but for all their other sins. Or, it *puts them in mind* of their idolatries to return to them, *when they look to the idolaters*, to repose a confidence in them. Note, The creatures we confide in are oftentimes therefore ruined, because there is no other way effectually to cure us of our confidence in them. Rather than Israel shall be ensnared again, the whole land of Egypt shall be laid waste. He that once *gave Egypt for their ransom*, *Isa. xliii. 3.* will now give *Egypt for their cure*; and it shall be *destroyed* rather than Israel shall not in this particular be *reformed*: God doth not only in justice, but in wisdom and goodness to us, break those creature-stays which we stay too much upon; and makes them to be *no more*, that they may be no more our confidence.

17. ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. 19. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey, and

it shall be the wages for his army. 20. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord GOD. 21. ¶ In that day will I cause the horn of the house of Israel to bud forth, and I will give thee the opening of the mouth in the midst of them, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The date of this prophecy is observable; it was in the twenty-seventh year of Ezekiel's captivity, sixteen years after the prophecy in the former part of the chapter, and almost as long after those which follow in the next chapters; but it comes in here for the explication of all that was said against Egypt. After the destruction of Jerusalem Nebuchadnezzar spent two or three campaigns in the conquests of the Ammonites and Moabites, and making himself master of their countries. Then he spent thirteen years in the siege of Tyre; during all that time the Egyptians were embroiled in war with the Cyrenians, and one with another, by which they were very much weakened and impoverished; and just at the end of the siege of Tyre, God delivers this prophecy to Ezekiel, to signify to him, that that utter destruction of Egypt, which he had foretold fifteen or sixteen years before, which had been but in part accomplished hitherto, should now be completed by Nebuchadnezzar. The prophecy which begins here, it should seem, is continued to the twentieth verse of the next chapter. And Dr Lightfoot observes, that it is the last prophecy we have of this prophet, and should have been last in the book, but is laid here that all the prophecies against Egypt might come together. The particular destruction of Pharaoh-Hophrah, foretold in the former part of this chapter, was likewise foretold Jer. xlv. 30. This general devastation of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar was foretold Jer. xliii. 10. Observe,

1. What success God would give to Nebuchadnezzar and his forces against Egypt. God gave him *that land*, that he might *take the spoil and prey* of it, ver. 19, 20. It was a cheap and easy prey, he subdued it with very little difficulty. The blood and treasure expended upon the conquest of it was inconsiderable; but it was a rich prey, and he carried off a great deal from it that was of value. Their having been divided among themselves no doubt gave a common enemy great advantage against them, who when they had been so long preying upon one another, soon made a prey of them all. *En ! quò discordia cives perduxit miseros*, Jeremiah foretold that Nebuchadnezzar should *array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd puts on his coat*, which intimates what a rich and cheap prey it should be.

2. Upon what considerations God would give Nebuchadnezzar this success against Egypt; it was to be a recompence to him, for the *hard service* with which he had caused his army to serve against Tyre, ver. 18, 19, 20. (1.) The taking of Tyre was a tedious piece of work, it cost Nebuchadnezzar abundance of blood, and treasure; it held out thirteen years, all that time the Chaldean army was hard at it to make themselves masters of it. A large current of the sea, between Tyre and the continent, was filled up with earth, and many other difficulties, which were thought insuperable, they had to struggle with; but so great a prince having begun such an undertaking, thought himself bound in honour to push it on, whatever it cost him. How many thousand lives have been sacrificed to such points of honour as this was! In prosecuting this siege, *every head was made bald, and every shoulder peeled*, with carrying burthens, and labouring in the water, when they had a strong tide, and a strong town to contend with. Egypt a large kingdom, being divided within itself, is easily conquered; Tyre a single city, being unanimous, is hardly subdued. Those that have much to do in the world, find some affairs go on a great deal more readily and easily than others. But, (2.) In this service God owns that they *wrought for him*, ver. 20. He set them at work for the humbling of a proud city, and its king; though *they meant not so*, neither *did their heart think so*, who were employed in it. Note, Even great men, and ill men, are tools that God makes use of; and are *working for him*, even when they are pursuing their own covetous and ambitious designs; so wonderfully doth God over-rule all to his own glory. Yet, (3.) For this service he had *no wages*, nor *his army*. He was at a vast expence to take Tyre; and when he had it, though it was a very rich city, and he promised himself good plunder for his army from it, he was disappointed; the Tyrians sent away by ship their best effects, and threw the rest into the sea, so that they had nothing but bare walls. Thus are the children of this world ordinarily frustrated in their highest expectations from it. Therefore, (4.) He shall have the spoil of Egypt to recompense him for his service against Tyre. Note, God will be behind-hand with none for any service they do for him, but one way or other will recompense them for it; none shall kindle a fire on his altar for nought. The service done for him by worldly men with worldly designs shall be recompensed with a mere worldly reward, which his faithful servants, that have a sincere regard to his will and glory, would not be put off with. This accounts for the prosperity of wicked men in this world; God is in it paying them for some service or other, in which he has made use of them;

verily they have their reward. Let none envy it them. The conquest of Egypt is spoken of as Nebuchadnezzar's *full reward*, for that completed his dominion over the then known world in a manner; that was the last of the kingdoms he subdued; when he was master of that, he became the *head of gold*.

3. The mercy God had in store for the house of Israel soon after. When the tide is at the highest it will turn, and so it will when it is at the lowest. Nebuchadnezzar was in the zenith of his glory when he had conquered Egypt, but within a year after he run mad, Dan. iv. was so seven years; and within a year or two after he had recovered his senses he resigned his life. When he was *at the highest*, Israel was *at the lowest*, then were they at the depth of their captivity, their bones dead and dry; but *in that day the horn of the house of Israel shall bud forth*, ver. 21. The day of their deliverance shall begin to dawn, and they shall have some little reviving in their bondage; in the honour that shall be done, (1.) To their *princes*; they are the *horns of the house of Israel*, the seat of their glory and power, these began to *bud forth* when Daniel and his fellows were highly preferred in Babylon; Daniel sat in the *gate of the city*; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were set over the *affairs of the province*, Dan. ii. 49. these were all of the *king's seed*, and of the *princes*, Dan. i. 3. And it was within a year after the conquest of Egypt, that they were thus preferred; and soon after three of them were made famous by the honour God put upon them in bringing them alive out of the burning fiery furnace. This might very well be called the *budding forth of the horn of the house of Israel*. And some years after, this promise had a further accomplishment in the enlargement and elevation of Jehoiachin king of Judah, Jer. lii. 31, 32. They were both tokens of God's favour to Israel, and happy *omens*. (2.) To their *prophets*. And *I will give thee the opening of the mouth*. Though none of Ezekiel's prophecies after this are recorded, yet we have reason to think he went on prophesying, and with more liberty and boldness when Daniel and his fellows were in power; and would be ready to protect him not only from the Babylonian, but from the wicked ones of his own people. Note, It bodes well to a people, when God enlargeth the liberties of his ministers, and they are countenanced and encouraged in their work.

C H A P. XXX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A continuation of the prophecy against Egypt, which we had in the latter part of the foregoing chapter, just before the desolation of that once flourishing kingdom was completed by Nebuchadnezzar. In which is foretold the destruction of all her allies and confederates, all her interests and concerns, and the several steps which the king of Babylon should take in pushing on this destruction, ver. 1—19. (2.) A repetition of a former prophecy against Egypt, just before the desolation of it begun by their own ill conduct, which gradually weakened them, and prepared the way for the king of Babylon, ver. 20—26. It is all much to the same purpose with what we had before.

1. THE word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Howl ye, wo worth the day. 3. For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day, it shall be the time of the heathen. 4. And the sword shall come upon Egypt, and great pain shall be in Ethiopia, when the slain shall fall in Egypt, and they shall take away her multitude, and her foundation shall be broken down. 5. Ethiopia, and Libya, and Lydia, and all the mingled people, and Chub, and the men of the land that is in league, shall fall with them by the sword. 6. Thus saith the LORD, They also that uphold Egypt shall fall, and the pride of her power shall come down: from the tower of Syene shall they fall in it by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. 7. And they shall be desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted. 8. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have set a fire in Egypt, and when all her helpers shall be destroyed. 9. In that day shall messengers go forth from me in ships, to make the careless Ethiopians afraid, and great pain shall come upon them, as in the day of Egypt: for so, it cometh. 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will also make the multitude of Egypt to cease by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. 11. He and his people with him, the terrible of the nation shall be brought to destroy the land: and they shall draw

draw their swords against Egypt, and fill the land with the slain. 12. And I will make the rivers dry, and sell the land into the hand of the wicked, and I will make the land waste, and all that is therein, by the hand of strangers: I the LORD have spoken. 13. Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will also destroy the idols, and I will cause *their* images to cease out of Noph: and there shall be no more a prince of the land of Egypt, and I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. 14. And I will make Pathros desolate, and will set fire in Zoan, and will execute judgments in No. 15. And I will pour my fury upon Sin, the strength of Egypt, and I will cut off the multitude of No. 16. And I will set fire in Egypt, Sin shall have great pain, and No shall be rent asunder, and Noph shall have distresses daily. 17. The young men of Aven and of Phi-beseth, shall fall by the sword: and these cities shall go into captivity. 18. At Tehaphnehes also the day shall be darkened, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt: and the pomp of her strength shall cease in her: as for her, a cloud shall cover her, and her daughters shall go into captivity. 19. Thus will I execute judgments in Egypt: and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The prophecy of the destruction of Egypt is here very full and particular, as well as, in the general, very frightful. What can protect a provoking people, when the righteous God comes forth to contend with them?

1. It shall be a very lamentable destruction, and such as shall occasion great sorrow; ver. 2, 3. *Howl ye*, you may justly shriek now it is coming, for you will be made to shriek, and make hideous out-cries, when it comes. Cry out, *Wo worth the day*, or *ah the day*, alas, *because of the day*; the terrible day, *wo and alas!* for the day is near; the day we have so long dreaded, so long deserved. It is the day of the Lord, the day in the which he will manifest himself as a God of vengeance; you have your day now, when you carry all before you, and trample on all about you, but God will have his day now shortly; the day of the revelation of his righteous judgment, *Psal. xxxvii. 13.* It will be a cloudy day; that is dark and dismal, without the shining forth of any comfort; and it shall threaten a storm; fire and brimstone and a horrible tempest. It shall be the time of the heathen, i. e. of reckoning with the heathen, for all their heathenish practices; that time which David spoke of when God would pour out his fury upon the heathen, *Psal. lxxix. 6.* when they should sink, *Psal. ix. 15.*

2. It shall be the destruction of Egypt, and of all the states and countries in confederacy with her, and in her neighbourhood. (1.) Egypt her self shall fall, ver. 4. The sword shall come upon Egypt, the sword of the Chaldeans, and it shall be a victorious sword, for the slain shall fall in Egypt, fall by it, fall before it. Is the country populous? they shall take away her multitude; is it strong and well fixed? Her foundations shall be broken down, and then the fabrick, tho' built never so fine, never so high, will fall of course. (2.) Her neighbours and inmates shall fall with her; when the slain fall so thick in Egypt, great pain shall be in Ethiopia, both that in Africa, which is on the neighbourhood of Egypt on one side, and that in Asia, which is near to it on the other side; when their neighbour's house was on fire, they could not but apprehend their own in danger: nor were their fears groundless, for they shall all fall with them by the sword, ver. 5. Ethiopia, and Lybia, Cush, and Phut, so the Hebrew names are, two of the sons of Ham, who are mentioned, and Mizraim, that is, Egypt between them, *Gen. x. 6.* The Lydians that were famous archers, are spoken of as confederates with Egypt, *Jer. xlv. 9.* These shall fall with Egypt, and Chub; the Chaldeans, the inhabitants of the inner Lybia; these and others were the mingled people; there were those of all these and other countries that upon some account or other resided in Egypt; as did also the men of the land that is in league, some of the remains of the people of Israel and Judah, the children of the covenant, or league, as they are called, *Acts iii. 25.* the children of the promise, *Gal. iv. 28.* These sojourned in Egypt, contrary to God's command, and these shall fall with them. Note, They that will take their lot with God's enemies shall have their lot with them; yea, though they be in profession the men of the land that is in league with God.

3. All that pretend to support the sinking interests of Egypt shall come down under her, shall come down with her, ver. 6. They that uphold Egypt shall fall, and then Egypt must fall of course. See the justice of God; Egypt pretended to uphold Jerusalem when that was tottering, but proved a deceitful reed; and now they that pretended to uphold Egypt shall prove no better. Those that deceive others are commonly paid in their own coin, they are themselves deceived. (1.) Doth Egypt think herself upheld by the absolute authority

and dominion of her king? the pride of her power shall come down; ver. 6. The power of the king of Egypt was his pride; but that shall be broken, and humbled, (2.) Is the multitude of her people her support? These shall fall by the sword, even from the tower of Syene; which is in the utmost corner of the land, from that side of it by which the enemy shall enter. Both the countries and the cities, the husbandmen and the merchants, shall be desolate, ver. 7. as before, chap. xxix. 12. Even the multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, ver. 10. That populous country shall be depopulated. The land shall be even filled with the slain, ver. 11. (3.) Is the river Nile her support, and the several chanel of it a defence to her? I will make the rivers dry, ver. 12. so that those natural fortifications which were thought impregnable, because impassable, shall stand them in no stead. (4.) Are her idols a support to her? Those shall be destroyed, those imaginary upholders shall appear more than ever to be imaginary, for so images are when they pretend to be deliverers, and strong-holds. ver. 13. I will cause their images to cease out of Noph. (5.) Is her royal family her support? There shall be no more a prince in the land of Egypt; the royal family shall be extirpated and extinguished, which had continued so long. (6.) Is her courage her support, and doth she think to uphold herself by the bravery of her men of war, who have now of late been inured to service? That shall fail, I will put a fear in the land of Egypt. (7.) Is the rising generation her support; is she upheld by her children? and doth she think herself happy because she hath her quiver full of them? Alas, the young men shall fall by the sword, ver. 17. and the daughters shall go into captivity, ver. 18. and so she shall be robbed of all her hopes.

4. God shall inflict these desolating judgments on Egypt; ver. 8. They shall know that I am the Lord, and greater than all gods, than all their gods, when I have set a fire in Egypt. The fire that consumes nations is of God's kindling; and when he sets fire to a people all their helpers shall be destroyed; those that go about to quench the fire shall themselves be devoured by it; for who can stand before him when he is angry? When he pours out his fury upon a place, when he sets fire to it, ver. 15, 16. Neither its strength nor its multitude can stand in any stead.

5. The king of Babylon and his army shall be employed as instruments of this destruction. The multitude of Egypt shall be made to cease, and be quite cut off, by the hand of the king of Babylon, ver. 10. They that undertook to protect Israel from the king of Babylon, shall not be able to protect themselves. It is said of the Chaldeans who should destroy Egypt, (1.) That they are strangers, ver. 12. who therefore shall shew no compassion for old acquaintance sake, but shall carry it strangely towards them. (2.) That they are the terrible of the nations, ver. 11. both in respect of force, and in respect of fierceness; and being terrible they shall make terrible work. (3.) That they are the wicked; who will not be restrained by reason and conscience, the laws of nature, or the laws of nations, for they are without law. I will sell the land into the hand of the wicked. They do violence unjustly, wicked as they are, yet so far as they are instruments in God's hand of executing his judgments, it is on his part justly done. Note, God often makes one wicked man a scourge to another; and even wicked men acquire a title to prey, *jura belli*, for God sells it into their hands.

6. No place in the land of Egypt shall be exempted from the fury of the Chaldean army, not the strongest, not the remotest; the sword shall go through the land. Divers places are here named: Pathros, Zoan, and No, ver. 14. Sin and Noph, ver. 15, 16. Aven and Phibeseth, ver. 17. Tehaphnehes, ver. 18. These shall be made desolate, shall be fired, and God's judgments shall be executed upon them, and his fury poured out upon them. Their strength and multitude shall be cut off; they shall have great pain, shall be rent asunder with fear, and shall have distresses daily; their day shall be darkened, their honours, comforts, and hopes shall be extinguished; their yokes shall be broken, so that they shall no more oppress and tyrannize as they have done; the pomp of their strength shall cease, and a cloud shall cover them; a cloud so thick that through it they shall not see any hopes, nor shall their glory be seen or shine further. And (lastly) the Ethiopians that are at a distance from them, as well as those that are mingled with them, shall share in their pain and terror; God will by his providence spread the rumour, and the careless Ethiopians shall be made afraid, ver. 9. Note, God can strike a terror upon those that are most secure: fearfulness shall when he pleases surprize the most presumptuous hypocrites.

The close of this prediction leaves, (1.) The land of Egypt mortified. Thus will I execute judgments on Egypt, ver. 19. The destruction of Egypt is the executing of judgments, which intimates not only that it is done justly, for its sins, but that it is done regularly and legally, by a judicial sentence. All the executions God doth are according to his judgments. (2.) The God of Israel herein glorified, they shall know that I am the Lord. The Egyptians shall be made to know it, and the people of God shall be made to know it better. The Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth.

20. ¶ And it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first month, in the seventh day of the month, that the

the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 21. Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and lo, it shall not be bound up to be healed, to put a roller to bind it, to make it strong to hold the sword. 22. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and will break his arms, the strong, and that which was broken; and I will cause the sword to fall out of his hand. 23. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries. 24. And I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand: but I will break Pharaoh's arms, and he shall groan before him with the groanings of a deadly wounded man. 25. But I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and the arms of Pharaoh shall fall down; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall put my sword into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt. 26. And I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and disperse them among the countries, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

This short prophecy of the weakning of the power of Egypt was delivered about the time that the army of the Egyptians which attempted to raise the siege of Jerusalem, was frustrated in their enterprizes, and returned *re infecta*; whereupon the king of Babylon renewed the siege, and carried his point. The kingdom of Egypt was very ancient, and had been many ages considerable. That of Babylon was but lately arrived to its great pomp and power, being built upon the ruins of the kingdom of Assyria: Now it is with them as it is with families and states, some are growing up, others are declining and going back; one must increase, and the other must of course decrease.

1. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Egypt shall grow weaker and weaker. The extent of his territories shall be abridged, his wealth and power shall be diminished, and he shall become less able than ever to help either himself or his friend. (1.) This was in part done already, *ver. 21. I have broken the arm of Pharaoh*, some time ago. One arm of that kingdom might well be reckoned broken, when the king of Babylon routed the forces of Pharaoh-Necho at Carchemish, *Jer. xlv. 2.* and made himself master of all that pertained to Egypt from the river of Egypt to Euphrates, *2 Kings xxiv. 7.* Egypt had been long in gathering strength, and extending its dominions, and therefore that there may be a proportion observed in providence, it loseth its strength slowly and by degrees. It was soon after the king of Egypt slew good king Josiah, and in the same reign, that its arm was thus broken, and it received that fatal blow which it never recovered. Before Egypt's heart and neck was broke, its arm was; God's judgments come upon a people by steps, that they may meet him repenting. When the arm of Egypt is broken it shall not be bound up to be healed, for none can heal the wounds that God gives, but he himself. Those whom he disarms, whom he disables, cannot again hold the sword. (2.) This was to be done again, one arm was broken before, and something was done towards the setting of it, towards the healing of the deadly wound that was given to the breast. But now, *ver. 22. I am against Pharaoh, and will break both his arms; both the strong, and that which was broken, and set again.* Note, If lesser judgments do not prevail to humble and reform sinners, God will send greater. Now God will cause the sword to fall out of his hand, which he caught hold of as thinking himself strong enough to hold it. It is repeated, *ver. 24. I will break Pharaoh's arms.* He had been a cruel oppressor to the people of God, formerly, and of late, the staff of a broken rod to them. And now God by breaking his arms reckons with him for both. God justly breaks that power which is abused either to put wrongs upon people, or to put cheats upon them. But this is not all; (1.) The king of Egypt shall be dispirited, when he finds himself in danger of the king of Babylon's forces, he shall groan before him with the groaning of a deadly wounded man. Note, It is common for those that are most elevated in their prosperity, to be most dejected and disheartened in their adversity. Pharaoh, even before the sword toucheth him, shall groan as if he had received his death's wound. (2.) The people of Egypt shall be dispersed, *ver. 23.* and again, *ver. 26. I will scatter them among the nations.* Other nations had mingled with them, *ver. 5.* now they shall be mingled with other nations, and seek shelter in them; and so be made to know that the Lord is righteous.

2. It is here foretold that the kingdom of Babylon shall grow stronger and stronger, *ver. 24, 25.* It is said and repeated that God will, (1.) Put strength into the king of Babylon's arms, that he may be able to go through the service he is designed for. (2.) That he will put a sword, his sword, into the king of Babylon's hand, which signified his giving him a commission, and furnishing him with arms for carrying on a war particularly

against Egypt. Note, As judges on the bench like Pilate, *John xix. 11.* so generals in the field like Nebuchadnezzar, have no power but what is given them from above.

C H A P. XXXI.

The prophecy of this chapter, as the two chapters before, is against Egypt, and designed for the humbling and mortifying of Pharaoh. In passing sentence upon great criminals, it is usual to consult precedents, and to see what has been done to others in the like case, which serves both to direct and to justify the proceedings: Pharaoh stands indicted at the bar of divine justice for his pride and haughtiness; and the injuries he had done to God's people; but he thinks himself so high, so great, as not to be accountable to any authority; so strong, and so well guarded, as not to be conquerable by any force: The prophet is therefore directed to make a report to him of the case of the king of Assyria, whose head city was Nineveh. (1.) He must shew him how great a monarch the king of Assyria had been; what a vast empire he had, what a mighty sway he bore; the king of Egypt, as great as he was, could not go beyond him, *ver. 3—9.* (2.) He must then shew him, how like he was to the king of Assyria in pride, and carnal security, *ver. 10.* (3.) He must next read him the history of the fall and ruin of the king of Assyria, what a noise it made among the nations; and what a warning it gave to all potent princes to take heed of pride, *ver. 11—17.* (4.) He must leave the king of Egypt to apply all this to himself, to see his own face in the looking-glass of the king of Assyria's sin, and to foresee his own fall through the perspective glass of his ruin, *ver. 18.*

1. AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak unto Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to his multitude, Whom art thou like in thy greatness? 3. ¶ Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. 4. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with her rivers running round about his plants, and sent out her little rivers unto all the trees of the field. 5. Therefore his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters, when he shot forth. 6. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. 7. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. 8. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir-trees were not like his boughs, and the chefnut-trees were not like his branches; not any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty. 9. I have made him fair by the multitude of his branches: so that all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him.

This prophecy bears date the month before Jerusalem was taken, as that in the close of the foregoing chapter about four months before; when God's people were in the depth of their distress, it would be some comfort to them, as it would serve likewise for a check to the pride and malice of their neighbours, that insulted over them, to be told from heaven that the cup was going round, even the cup of trembling, that it would shortly be taken out of the hands of God's people, and put into the hands of those that hated them, *Isa. li. 22, 23.* In this prophecy,

1. The prophet is directed to put Pharaoh upon searching the records for a case parallel to his own; *ver. 2. Speak to Pharaoh, and to his multitude,* to the multitude of his attendants, that contributed so much to his magnificence, and the multitude of his armies, that contributed so much to his strength; these he was proud of, these he put a confidence in, and they were as proud of him, and trusted as much in him. Now ask him, Whom art thou like in thy greatness? We are apt to judge of ourselves by comparison: Those that think highly of themselves fancy themselves as great and as good as such that have been mightily celebrated: The flatterers of princes tell them whom they equal in pomp and grandeur; Well, saith God, Let him pitch upon the most famous potentate that ever was, and it shall be allowed that he is like him in greatness, and no way inferior

terior to him; but let him pitch upon whom he will, he will find that *his day came to fall*; he will see there was an end of all his *perfection*, and must therefore expect the end of his own in like manner. Note, The falls of others both into sin and ruin, are intended as admonitions to us not to be secure or high-minded, or to think we stand out of danger.

2. He is directed to shew him an instance of one whom he resembled in greatness; and that was the Assyrian, *ver. 3.* whose monarchy had continued from Nimrod: Sennacherib was one of the mighty princes of that monarchy; but it sunk down soon after him, and the monarchy of Nebuchadnezzar was built upon its ruins, or rather grafted upon its stock. Let us now see what a flourishing prince the king of Assyria was. He is here compared to a stately cedar, *ver. 3.* The glory of the house of David is illustrated by the same similitude, *chap. xvii. 3.* The olive-tree, the fig-tree, and the vine, which were all fruit-trees, had refused to be promoted over the trees, because they would not leave their fruitfulness, *Judg. ix. 8.* And therefore the choice falls upon the cedar that is stately and strong, and casts a great shadow, but bears no fruit.

1. The Assyrian monarch was a tall cedar, such as the cedars in Lebanon generally were, of a high stature, and his top among the thick boughs; he was attended by other princes that were tributaries to him, and was surrounded by a life-guard of brave men. He surpassed all the princes in his neighbourhood, they were all shrubs to him. *Ver. 5.* His height was exalted above all the trees of the field, they were many of them very high, but he overtopped them all, *ver. 8.* The cedars, even those in the garden of Eden, where, we may suppose, were the best of the kind, would not hide him, but his top-branches out-shot theirs.

2. He was a spreading cedar; his branches did not only run up in height, but run out in breadth; noting, that this mighty prince was not only exalted to great dignity and honour, and had a name above the names of the great men of the earth, but that he obtained great dominion and power; his territories were large, and he extended his conquests far, and his influences much farther. This cedar, like a vine, sent forth his branches to the sea, to the river, *Psal. lxxx. 11.* His boughs were multiplied, his branches became long, *ver. 5.* So that he had a shadowing brow, *ver. 3.* This contributed very much to his beauty, that he grew proportionably large as well as high. He was fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches, *ver. 7.* very comely as well as very stately, fair by the multitude of his branches, *ver. 9.* His large dominions were well managed, like a spreading tree that is kept in shape and good order, by the skill of the gardiner, so as to be very beautiful to the eye. His government was as amiable in the eyes of wise men, as it was admirable in the eyes of all men. The fir-trees were not like his boughs, so straight, so green, so regular; nor were the branches of the chestnut-trees like his branches, so thick, so spreading. In short, no tree in the garden of God, in Eden, in Babylon, for that stood where paradise was planted; there where there was every tree that was pleasant to the sight, *Gen. ii. 9.* there was none like to this cedar in beauty, i. e. in all the nations about there was no prince so much admired, so much courted, and which every body was so much in love with, as the king of Assyria. Many of them did virtuously, but he excelled them all, out-shone them all. All the trees of Eden envied him, *ver. 9.* When they found they could not compare with him, they were angry and grieved that he so far out-did them, and secretly grudged him the praise due to him. Note, It is the unhappiness of those, who in any thing excel others, that thereby they make themselves the objects of envy; and who can stand before envy?

3. He was serviceable, as far as a standing growing cedar could be, and that was only by his shadow; *ver. 6.* All the fowls of heaven, some of all sorts, made their nests in his boughs, where they were sheltered from the injuries of the weather. The beasts of the field put themselves under the protection of his branches, there they were levant, and couchant, there they brought forth their young; for they had there a natural covert from the heat, and from the storm. The meaning of all is, under his shadow dwelt all great nations; they all fled to him for safety, and were willing to swear allegiance to him, if he would undertake to protect them; as travellers in a shower come under thick trees for shelter. Note, Those who have power ought to use it for the protection and comfort of those whom they have power over; for to that end they are intrusted with power. Even the bramble, if he be anointed king, invites the trees to come and trust in his shadow, *Judg. ix. 15.* But the utmost security that any creature, even the king of Assyria himself, can give, is but like the shadow of a tree, which is but a scanty and slender protection, and leaves a man many ways exposed: Let us therefore flee to God for protection, and he will take us under the shadow of his wings, where we shall be warmer and safer than under the shadow of the strongest and stateliest cedar, *Psal. xvii. 8.* — xci. 4.

4. He seemed to be settled and established in his greatness and power. For, (1.) It was God that made him fear, *ver. 9.* For by him kings reign: he was comely with the comeliness that God put upon him. Note, God's hand must be eyed and owned in the advancement of the great men of the earth; and therefore No. lxxxix.

we must not envy them; yet will not that secure the continuance of their prosperity; for he that gave them their beauty, if they be deprived of it, knows how to turn it into deformity. (2.) He seemed to have a good bottom; this cedar was not like the heath in the desert, made to inhabit the parched places, *Jer. xvii. 6.* it was not a root in a dry ground, *Isa. liii. 2.* No, he had abundance of wealth to support his power and grandeur, *ver. 4.* The waters made him great, he had vast treasures, large stores, and magazines, which were as the deep that set him up on high, constant revenues coming in by taxes, customs, and crown-rents, which were as rivers running round about his plants, these enabled him to strengthen and secure his interests every where, for he sent out his little rivers, or conduits, to all the trees of the field to water them, and when they had maintenance from the king's palace, *Ezra iv. 14.* and their country was nourished by the king's country, *Acts xii. 20.* they would be serviceable and faithful to him. Those that have wealth flowing upon them in great riches, find themselves obliged to send it out again in little rivers, for as goods are increased they are increased that eat them; and the more men have, the more occasion they have for it; yea, and still the more they have occasion for. The branches of this cedar became long, because of the multitude of waters which fed them, *ver. 5.* and *ver. 7.* his root was by great waters, which seems to secure it that its leaf should never wither, *Psal. i. 3.* that it should not see when heat comes, *Jer. xvii. 8.* Note, Worldly people may seem to have an established prosperity, yet it only seems so, *Job v. 7.* *Psal. xxxvii. 33.*

10. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Because thou hast lifted up thy self in height, and he hath shot up his top among the thick boughs, and his heart is lifted up in his height; 11. I have therefore delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen: he shall surely deal with him, I have driven him out for his wickedness. 12. And strangers, the terrible of the nations, have cut him off, and have left him: upon the mountains and in all the vallies his branches are fallen, and his boughs are broken by all the rivers of the land, and all the people of the earth are gone down from his shadow, and have left him. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, and all the beasts of the field shall be upon his branches: 14. To the end that none of all the trees by the waters exalt themselves for their height, neither shoot up their top among the thick boughs, neither their trees stand up in their height, all that drink water: for they are all delivered unto death to the nether parts of the earth in the midst of the children of men, with them that go down to the pit. 15. Thus saith the Lord GOD, in the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning, I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed; and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. 17. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword, and they that were his arm that dwelt under his shadow in the midst of the heathen. 18. ¶ To whom art thou thus like in glory and in greatness among the trees of Eden? yet shalt thou be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth: thou shalt lye in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that be slain by the sword: this is Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

We have seen the king of Egypt resembling the king of Assyria in pomp and power, and prosperity, how like he was to him in his greatness; now here we see,

1. How he doth likewise resemble him in his pride, *ver. 10.* for as face answers to face in a glass, so doth one corrupt carnal heart to another; and the same temptations of a prosperous state by which some are overcome are fatal to many others too: Thou, O king of Egypt, hast lifted up thy self in height, hast been proud of thy wealth and power, *chap. xxix. 3.* And just so he, i. e. the king of Assyria, when he had shot up his top among the thick boughs, his heart was presently lifted up in his height, and he grew insolent and imperious, set God himself at distance, and trampled upon his people; witness the messages and letter which the great king, the king of Assyria, sent to Hezekiah, *Isa.*

Isa. xxxvi. 4. How haughtily doth he speak of himself, and his own achievements, how scornfully of that great and good man? There were other sins in which the Egyptians and the Assyrians did concur, particularly that of oppressing God's people, it is charged upon them both together, *Isa. lii. 4.* but here that sin is run up to its cause, and that was pride; for it is the contempt of the proud, that they are filled with. Note, When men outward condition riseth, their minds commonly rise with it. And it is very rare to find an humble spirit in the midst of great advancements.

2. How he shall therefore resemble him in his fall; and for the opening of this part of the comparison,

1. Here is a history of the fall of the king of Assyria. For his part, saith God, *ver. 11. I have therefore, because he was thus lifted up, delivered him into the hand of the mighty one of the heathen.* Cyaxares king of the Medes, in the twenty sixth year of his reign, in conjunction with Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign destroyed Nineveh, and with it the Assyrian empire; Nebuchadnezzar, though he was not then, yet afterwards became very emphatically the mighty one of the heathen; most mighty among them, and most mighty over them, to prevail against them. (1.) It is God himself that orders his ruin; *I have delivered him into the hand of the executioner; I have driven him out.* Note, God is the judge who puts down and sets up another, *Psal. lxxvi. 7.* And when he pleaseth he can extirpate and expel those who think themselves, and seem to others to have taken deepest root. And the mightiest ones of the heathens could not gain their point against those they contend with, if the Almighty did not himself deliver them into their hands. (2.) It is his own sin that procures his ruin. *I have driven him out for his wickedness.* None are driven out from their honour, power, and possessions, but it is for their wickedness. None of our comforts are ever lost, but what have been a thousand times forfeited. If the wicked are driven away, it is in their wickedness. (3.) It is a mighty one of the heathen that shall be the instrument of his ruin. For God often employs one wicked man in punishing another. *He shall surely deal with him,* shall know how to manage him as great as he is. Note, Proud imperious men will sooner or later meet with their match.

Now in this history of the fall of the Assyrian, observe,

1. A continuation of the similitude of the cedar. He grew very high, and extended his boughs very far. But his day comes to fall. (1.) This stately cedar was cropt; *the terrible of the nations cut him off.* Soldiers, who being both armed and commissioned to kill and slay, and to destroy, may well be reckoned among the terrible of the nations; they have lopped off his branches first; have seized upon some parts of his dominion, and forced them out of his hands; so that in all mountains and vallies of the nations about, in the high-lands, and low-lands, and by all the rivers, there were cities or countries that were broken off from the Assyrian monarchy, that had been subject to it, but were either revolted or recovered from it. Its feathers were borrowed, and when every bird had fetched back its own, it was naked like the stump of a tree. (2.) It was deserted; *all the people of the earth, that had fled to him for shelter, are gone down from his shadow, and have left him.* When he was disabled to give them protection, they thought they no longer owed him allegiance. Let not great men be proud of the number of those that attend them, and have a dependence upon them, it is only for what they can get; when providence frowns upon them, their retinue is soon dispersed and scattered from them. (3.) It was insulted over, and its fall triumphed in; *ver. 13. Upon his ruin shall all the fowls of the heaven remain, to tread upon the broken branches of this cedar.* Its fall is triumphed in by the other trees, who were angry to see themselves over-stripped so much. *All the trees of Eden, that were cut down and fallen before him, all that drank water of the rain of heaven, as the stump of the tree that is left in the south, is said to be wet with the dew of heaven, Dan. iv. 23. and to bud through the scent of water; Job xiv. 9. They shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth, when they see this proud cedar brought as low as themselves. Solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris.* But, on the contrary, the trees of Lebanon, that are yet standing in their height and strength, mourned for him, and the trees of the field fainted for him, because they could not but read their own destiny in his fall. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedar be shaken, for they cannot expect to stand long, Zech. xi. 2.*

2. A reddition of the similitude of the cedar. By the cutting down of this cedar is signified the slaughter of this mighty monarch, and all his adherents, and supporters; they are all delivered to death, to fall by the sword, as the cedar by the ax; he and his princes, who he said were altogether kings, go down to the grave, to the nether parts of the earth, in the midst of the children of men, as common persons of no quality or distinction, they die like men, *Psal. lxxxii. 7.* they were carried away with them that go down to the pit, and their pomp did neither protect them, nor descend after them. Again, *ver. 16. he was cast down to hell with them that descend into the pit;* he went into the state of the dead, and was buried as others are in obscurity and oblivion. Again, *ver. 17. They all that were his arm, on whom he staid, by whom*

he acted, and exerted his power, all that dwelt under his shadow, his subjects and allies, and all that had any dependence on him, they all went down into ruin, down into the grave with him, unto them that were slain with the sword, to those that were cut off by untimely deaths before them, under the load of guilt and shame. When great men fall, a great many fall with them, as a great many in like manner have fallen before them.

3. What God designed and aimed at in bringing down this mighty monarch and his monarchy. He designed thereby, (1.) To give an alarm to the nations about; to put them all to a stand, to put them all to a gaze, *ver. 16. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall;* they were all struck with astonishment to see so mighty a prince brought down thus; it gave a shock to all their confidences, every one thinking his turn would be next. *When he went down to the grave, ver. 15. I caused a mourning, a general lamentation, as the whole kingdom goes into mourning at the death of the king; in token of this general grief I covered the deep for him, put that into black, gave a stop to business in complaisance to this universal mourning, I restrained the floods, and the great waters were stayed, that they might run in another chanel, that of lamentation.* Lebanon particularly, the kingdom of Syria, that was sometimes in confederacy with the Assyrian, mourned for him; as the allies of Babylon, *Rev. xviii. 9.* (2.) To give an admonition to the nations about, and to their kings, *ver. 14. to the end that none of all the trees by the waters, though never so advantageously situated, may exalt themselves for their height, may be proud and conceited of themselves, and shoot up their top among the thick boughs, looking disdainfully upon others, nor stand upon themselves for their height, confiding in their own policies and powers; as if they could never be brought down. Let them all take warning by the Assyrian, for he once held up his head as high, and thought he kept his footing as firm as any of them; but his pride went before his destruction, and his confidence failed him. Note, The fall of proud presumptuous men is intended for warning to others to keep humble. It had been well for Nebuchadnezzar, who was himself active in bringing down the Assyrian, if he had taken the admonition.*

2. Here is a prophecy of the fall of the king of Egypt in like manner, *ver. 18. He thought himself like the Assyrian in glory and greatness, over-topping all the trees of Eden, as the cypress doth the shrubs; but thou also shalt be brought down, with other the trees that are pleasant to the sight, as those in Eden. Thou shalt be brought to the grave, to the nether, or lower, parts of the earth, thou shalt lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, that die in their uncleanness, die ingloriously, die under a curse, and at a distance from God; then shall those whom he has trampled upon triumph over him, saying, this is Pharaoh and all his multitude. See how mean he looks, how low he lies; see what all his pomp and pride is come to; here is all that is left of him. Note, Great men and great multitudes, with the great figure, and great noise they make in the world, when God comes to contend with them, will soon become little, less than nothing; such as Pharaoh and all his multitude.*

C H A P. XXXII.

Still we are upon the destruction of Pharaoh and Egypt; which is wonderfully enlarged upon, and with a great deal of emphasis. When we read so very much of Egypt's ruin, no less than six several prophecies at divers times delivered concerning it, we are ready to think surely there is some special reason for it. And, (1.) Perhaps it may look as far back as the book of Genesis, where we find, chap. xv. 14. that God determined to judge Egypt for oppressing his people; and though that was in part fulfilled in the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh, yet in this destruction here foretold, those old scores were reckoned for, and that was to have its full accomplishment. (2.) Perhaps it may look as far forward as the book of the Revelation, where we find that the great enemy of the gospel church, that makes war with the Lamb, is spiritually called Egypt, *Rev. xi. 8.* And, if so, the destruction of Egypt and its Pharaoh was a type of the destruction of that proud enemy; and betwixt this prophecy of the ruin of Egypt, and the prophecy of the destruction of the antichristian generation there is some analogy. We have two distinct prophecies in this chapter relating to Egypt, both in the same month, one on the first day, the other that day fortnight, probably both on the sabbath-day. They are both lamentations, not only to signify how lamentable the fall of Egypt should be, but to intimate how much the prophet himself should lament it from a generous principle of love to mankind. The destruction of Egypt is here represented under two similitudes. (1.) The killing of a lion or a whale, or some such devouring creature, *ver. 1—16.* (2.) The funeral of a great commander or captain-general, *ver. 17—32.* The two prophecies of this chapter are much of the same length.

AND it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth month, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say unto him, Thou art like a young lion of the nations, and thou art as a whale in the seas: and thou camest forth with thy rivers, and troubledst the waters with thy feet, and fouledst their rivers. 3. Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will therefore spread out my net over thee, with a company of many people, and they shall bring thee up in my net. 4. Then will I leave thee upon the land, I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee. 5. And I will lay thy flesh upon the mountains, and fill the vallies with thy height. 6. I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee. 7. And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark: I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. 8. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD. 9. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known. 10. Yea, I will make many people amazed at thee, and their kings shall be horribly afraid for thee, when I shall brandish my sword before them, and they shall tremble at every moment; every man for his own life, in the day of thy fall. 11. ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD, The sword of the king of Babylon shall come upon thee. 12. By the swords of the mighty will I cause thy multitude to fall, the terrible of the nations all of them; and they shall spoil the pomp of Egypt, and all the multitude thereof shall be destroyed. 13. I will destroy also all the beasts thereof from besides the great waters, neither shall the foot of man trouble them any more, nor the hoofs of beasts trouble them. 14. Then will I make their waters deep, and cause their rivers to run like oyl, saith the Lord GOD. 15. When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the LORD. 16. This is the lamentation wherewith they shall lament her: the daughters of the nations shall lament her: even for Egypt and for all her multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

Here, (1.) The prophet is ordered to *take up a lamentation for Pharaoh king of Egypt*, ver. 2. It concerns ministers to be much of a serious spirit, and in order thereunto to be frequent in *taking up lamentations* for the fall and ruin of sinners, as those that have not *desired* but dreaded the *woful day*. Note, Ministers that would affect others with the things of God, must make it appear that they are themselves affected with the miseries that sinners bring upon themselves by their sins. It becomes us to weep and tremble for those that will not weep and tremble for themselves, to try if thereby we may set them a weeping, set them a trembling.

2. He is ordered to shew cause for that lamentation.

1. Pharaoh has been a *troubler of the nations*, even of his own nation, which he should have procured the repose of. He is *like a young lion of the nations*, ver. 2. loud and noisy, hectoring and threatening as a lion when he roars. Great potentates, if they be tyrannical and oppressive, are in God's account no better than *beasts of prey*. He is like a whale or dragon, like a crocodile; so some, *in the seas*, very turbulent and vexatious, as the *leviathan* that *makes the deep to boil like a pot*, Job xli. 31. when Pharaoh engaged in an unnecessary war with the Cyrenians, he *came forth with his rivers*, with his armies, *troubled the waters*, disturbed his own kingdom, and the neighbour nations, *fouled the rivers*, and made them muddy. Note, A great deal of disquiet is often given to the world by the restless ambition, and implacable resentments of proud princes. Ahab is he that *troubles Israel*, and not Elijah.

2. He that has troubled others must expect to be himself troubled; for the Lord is righteous, *Jesh. vii. 25*.

1. This is set forth here by a comparison. Is Pharaoh like a *great whale*, which when it comes up the river gives great di-

turbance, a leviathan which Job cannot *draw out with a hook*? Job xli. 1. yet God has a net for him which is large enough to inclose him, and strong enough to secure him, *ver. 3. I will spread my net over thee*, even the army of the Chaldeans, a *company of many people*; they shall force him out of his fastnesses, dislodge him out of his possessions, throw him like a great fish upon dry ground, *upon the open field*, *ver. 4.* where being out of his element, he must die of course, and be a prey to the birds and beasts, as was foretold, *chap. xxix. 5.* What can the strongest fish do to help it self when it is out of the water, and lies gasping? *The flesh* of this great whale shall be *laid upon the mountains*, *ver. 5.* and the *vallies* shall be *filled with his height*. Such numbers of Pharaoh's soldiers shall be slain, that the dead bodies shall be scattered upon the hills, and there shall be heaps of them piled up in the vallies. Blood shall be shed in such abundance as to swell the rivers in the vallies. Or, such shall be the bulk, such the height, of this Leviathan, that when he is laid upon the ground he shall fill a valley. Such vast quantities of blood shall issue from this *Leviathan*, as shall *water the land of Egypt*, the land wherein *now he swims*, now he sports himself, *ver. 6.* It shall reach *to the mountains*, and the waters of Egypt shall again be *turned into blood*, by this means, the *rivers shall be full of thee*; the judgments executed upon Pharaoh of old are expressed by the *breaking of the heads of leviathan in the waters*, *Psal. lxxiv. 13, 14.* But now they go further, this old serpent has now not only his head bruised, but is all crushed to pieces.

2. It is set forth by a prophecy of the deep impressions which the destruction of Egypt should make upon the neighbour nations; it would put them all into a consternation, as the fall of the Assyrian monarchy did, *chap. xxxi. 15, 16.* When Pharaoh that had been like a blazing burning torch is *put out*, and *extinguished*, it shall make all about him look black, *ver. 7.* The heavens shall be hung with black, the *stars darkened*, the sun eclipsed, and the moon be deprived of her borrowed light. It is from the upper world that this lower receives its light; and therefore, *ver. 8.* when the *bright lights of heaven* are *made dark* above, darkness by consequence is *set upon the land*, upon the earth; so it shall be on the land of Egypt. Here the plague of darkness which was upon Egypt of old, for three days, seems to be alluded to, as before, the turning of the waters into blood. For when former judgments are forgotten, it is just they should be repeated. When their privy-counsellors and statesmen, and those that have the conduct of the publick affairs are deprived of wisdom, and made fools, and the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes, then their *lights are darkened*, and the land is in a mist. This is foretold, *Isa. xix. 13. The princes of Zoan are become fools.* Now upon the spreading of the report of the fall of Egypt, and the bringing of the news to remote countries, *countries which they had not known*, *ver. 9.* People shall be much affected, and shall feel themselves sensibly touched by it. (1.) It shall fill them with vexation to see such an ancient, wealthy, potent, kingdom thus humbled and brought down, and the pride of worldly glory which they have such a value for stained. The *hearts of many people* will be *vexed* to see the word of the God of Israel fulfilled in the destruction of Egypt, and that all the *gods of Egypt* were not able to relieve it. Note, The destruction of some wicked people is a vexation to others. (2.) It shall fill them with admiration, *ver. 10.* they shall be *amazed at thee*, shall wonder to see *so great riches* and power *come to nothing*, *Rev. xviii. 17.* Note, They that admire with complacency the pomp of this world, will admire with consternation the ruin of that pomp; which to those that know the vanity of all things here below is no surprize at all. (3.) It shall fill them with fear; even *their kings*, (that think it their prerogative to be secure) shall be *horribly afraid for thee*, concluding their own house to be in danger, when their neighbour's is on fire. *When I shall brandish my sword before them, they shall tremble every man for his own life.* Note, When the sword of God's justice is *drawn against* some to cut them off, it is thereby *brandished* before others to give them warning. And those that will not be admonished by it, and made to reform, yet shall be frightened by it, and *made to tremble*. They shall *tremble at every moment because of thy fall*. When others are ruined by sin, we have reason to quake for fear, as knowing our selves guilty and obnoxious. *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?*

3. It is set forth by a plain and express prediction of the desolation it self that should come upon Egypt.

1. The *instruments* of the desolation appear here very formidable. It is the *sword of the king of Babylon*, that warlike, that victorious, prince, that shall *come upon thee*, *ver. 11.* The *swords of the mighty*, even the *terrible of the nations*, *all of them*, *ver. 12.* an army that there is no standing before. Note, Those that delight in war, and are upon all occasions entering into contention, may expect some time or other to be engaged with those that will prove too hard for them. Pharaoh had been forward to quarrel with his neighbour, and to come forth *with his rivers*, with his armies, *ver. 2.* But God will now give him enough of it.

2. The *instances* of the desolation appear here very frightful; much the same with what we had before, *chap. xxix. 10, 11, 12.*

—xxx. 7. (1.) The *multitude* of Egypt shall be *destroyed*; not decimated, some picked out to be made examples, but all *cut off*. Note, The numbers of sinners, tho' they be a *multitude*, will neither secure them against God's power, nor entitle them to his pity, (2.) The pomp of Egypt shall be spoiled; the pomp of their court, what they have been proud of. Note, In renouncing the pomps of this world we did our selves a great kindness, for they are things that are soon spoiled, and cheat their admirers. (3.) The cattle of Egypt that used to feed by the rivers, shall be *destroyed*, ver. 13. either cut off by the sword, or carried off for a prey. Egypt was famous for horses, which would be an acceptable booty to the Chaldeans. The rivers shall be no more frequented as they have been by man and beast, that came thither to drink. (4.) The *waters of Egypt* that used to flow briskly, shall now grow deep, and flow, and heavy, and shall *run like oil*, ver. 14. a figurative expression signifying that there should be such an universal sadness and heaviness upon the whole nation, that even the rivers should go softly, and silently like mourners, and quite forget their rapid motion. (5.) The whole country of Egypt shall be stripped of its wealth; it shall be *destitute of that whereof it was full*, ver. 15. Corn and cattle, and all the pleasant fruits of the earth; when those are *smitten that dwell therein*, the ground is *untilled*, and that which is gathered becomes an easy prey to the invader. Note, God can soon empty those of this world's goods that have the greatest fulness of those things, and are full of them; that enjoy most, and have their hearts set upon those enjoyments. The Egyptians were *full of their pleasant and plentiful country*, and the rich products of it. Every one that talked with them might perceive how much it filled them. But God can soon make their *country destitute of that whereof it is full*; it is therefore our wisdom to be full of *treasures in heaven*. When the country is made destitute, (1.) It shall be an instruction to them, *then shall they know that I am the Lord*. A sensible conviction of the vanity of the world, and the fading perishing nature of all things in it, will contribute much to our right knowledge of God as our portion and happiness. (2.) It shall be a lamentation to all about them. *The daughters of the nations shall lament her*, ver. 16. either because being in *alliance* with her, they share in her grievances, and suffer with her; or being admirers of her they at least share in her grief, and sympathize with her. They shall lament *for Egypt and all her multitude*, it shall pity them to see so great a devastation made. By enlarging the matters of our joy, we increase the occasions of our sorrow.

17. ¶ It came to pass also in the twelfth year, in the fifteenth day of the month, *that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 18. Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down, even her, and the daughters of the famous nations, unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit. 19. Whom dost thou pass in beauty? go down, and be thou laid with the uncircumcised. 20. They shall fall in the midst of them that are slain by the sword: she is delivered to the sword; draw her, and all her multitudes. 21. The strong among the mighty shall speak to him out of the midst of hell with them that help him: they are gone down, they lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword. 22. Ashur is there, and all her company: his graves are about him: all of them slain, fallen by the sword. 23. Whose graves are set in the sides of the pit, and her company is round about her grave: all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which caused terror in the land of the living. 24. There is Elam, and all her multitude round about her grave, all of them slain, fallen by the sword, which are gone down uncircumcised into the nether parts of the earth, which caused their terror in the land of the living, yet have they born their shame with them that go down to the pit. 25. They have set her a bed in the midst of the slain with all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword: though their terror was caused in the land of the living, yet have they born their shame with them that go down to the pit: he is put in the midst of them that be slain. 26. There is Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude: her graves are round about him: all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword, though they caused their terror in the land of the living. 27. And they shall not lie with the mighty, that are fallen of the uncircumcised, which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war: and they have laid their swords*

under their heads, but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. 28. Yea, thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised, and shalt lie with them that are slain with the sword. 29. There is Edom, her kings and all her princes, which with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword: they shall lie with the uncircumcised, and with them that go down to the pit. 30. There be the princes of the north all of them, and all the Zidonians which are gone down with the slain, with their terror they are ashamed of their might, and they lie uncircumcised with them that be slain by the sword, and bear their shame with them that go down to the pit. 31. Pharaoh shall see them, and shall be comforted over all his multitude, even Pharaoh and all his army slain by the sword, saith the Lord GOD. 32. For I have caused my terror in the land of the living: and he shall be laid in the midst of the uncircumcised with them that are slain with the sword, even Pharaoh and all his multitude, saith the Lord GOD.

This prophecy concludes and compleats the burthen of Egypt, and leaves it, and all its multitude in the pit of destruction. We are here invited to attend the funeral of that once flourishing kingdom, to lament its fall, and to take a view of those who attend it to the grave, and accompany it in the grave. This dead corps of a kingdom is here,

1. *Brought to the grave.* The prophet is ordered to *cast them down* to the pit, ver. 18. to foretel it as one that had authority, as Jeremiah was set over the kingdoms, Jer. i. 10. He must speak in God's name, and as from him who will cast them down. Yet he must foretel it as one that had an *affectionate concern* for them; he must *wait for the multitude of Egypt*, even when he *casts them down*. When Egypt is slain, let her have an honourable funeral, befitting her quality; let her be buried *with the daughters of the famous nations*, in their burying-places, and with the same ceremony; it is but a poor allay to the reproach and terror of death, to be buried with those that were famous; yet this is all that is allowed to Egypt. Shall Egypt think to exempt her self from the common fate of proud and imperious nations? no, she must take her lot with them, ver. 19. *Whom dost thou pass in beauty?* Art thou so much fairer than any other nation, that thou shouldest expect therefore to be excused? no, others as fair as thou, are sunk into the pit; *go down therefore and be thou laid with the uncircumcised*. Thou art like them, and art like to lie among them; the multitude of Egypt shall all *fall in the midst of them that are slain with the sword*, now there is a general slaughter made among the nations, Egypt with the rest must drink of the bloody cup, and therefore she is *delivered to the sword*, to the sword of war, but in God's hand the sword of justice is delivered to be publicly executed: *draw her and all her multitude*; either draw them as the dead bodies of great men are drawn in honour to the grave in a hearse; or, as malefactors are drawn in disgrace to the place of execution, on a sledge; *draw them to the pit*, and let them be made a spectacle to the world.

2. This corps of a kingdom is *bid welcome to the grave*, and Pharaoh is made free of the congregation of the dead, and admitted into their regions, not without some pomp and ceremony, as Isa. xiv. 9, &c. the surprizing fall of the king of Babylon is thus illustrated, *hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming*, and to introduce thee into those mansions of darkness; so here, ver. 20. *they shall speak to him out of the midst of hell*, as it were congratulating his arrival, and calling him to join with them, in acknowledging the name, which neither he nor they would be brought to own when they were in their pomp and pride, that it is in vain to think of contesting with God, and none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. They shall say to him, and to him that pretended to help him, where are ye now? what have you brought your attempts to at last?

Divers nations are here mentioned as gone down to the grave before Egypt, that are ready to give her a scornful reception, and upbraid her with coming to them at last; these nations here spoken of probably were such as had been of late years ruined and wasted by the king of Babylon, and their princes cut off; let Egypt know that she has *neighbours fare*. When she goes to the grave she doth but *migrare ad plures*; there are *innumerable before her*. But it is observable, that tho' Judah and Jerusalem were just about this time or a little before utterly ruined and laid waste, yet they are not mentioned here among the nations that Egypt welcome to the pit; for tho' they suffered the same things that these nations suffered, and by the same hand, yet the kind intentions of their affliction, and its happy issue at last, and the mercy God had yet in reserve for them, altered the property of it; it was not to them a *going down to the*

the pit, as it was to the heathen; they were not smitten as others were, nor slain according to the slaughter of other nations, Isa. xxvii. 7. But let us see who they are that are gone to the grave before Egypt, that lie uncircumcised, slain by the sword, with whom she must now take up her lodging.

1. There lies the Assyrian empire, and all the princes and mighty men of that monarchy, ver. 22. *Asshur is there, and all her company*; all the countries that were tributaries to, and had dependence upon that crown. That mighty potentate that used to lie in state with his guards, and grandees about him, now lies in obscurity, with his graves about him, and his soldiers in them, unable any longer to do him service or honour; they are all of them slain, fallen by the sword; the number of their months was cut off in the midst, and being bloody and deceitful men they were not suffered to live out half their days. Their graves were set in the sides of the pit, all in a row, like beds in a common chamber, ver. 23. All their company is such as were slain, fallen by the sword; a vast congregation there is of such, who had caused terror in the land of the living: but as the death of those to whom they were a terror put an end to their fears; in the grave the prisoners rest together, and hear not the voice of the oppressor, Job iii. 18. so the death of these mighty men puts an end to their terrors; who is afraid of a dead lion? Note, Death will be a king of terrors to those, who instead of making themselves blessings, made themselves terrors in their generation.

2. There lies the kingdom of Persia, which perhaps within the memory of man at that time had been wasted and brought down. *There is Elam and all her multitude*, the king of Elam; and his numerous armies, ver. 24, 25. They also had caused their terror in the land of the living, had made a fearful noise and bluster among the nations in their day. But Elam has now a grave by her self, and the graves of the common people round about her, fallen by the sword; she has her bed in the midst of the slain, that went down uncircumcised, unsanctified, unholy, and not in covenant with God: They have born their shame with them that go down to the pit, i. e. they are fallen under the common disgrace and mortification of mankind, that they die and are buried; nay, they die under particular marks of ignominy, which God and man put upon them. Note, They who cause their terror, shall sooner or later bear their shame, and be made a terror to themselves. The king of Elam is put in the midst of them that be slain. All the honour he can now pretend to, is to be buried in the chief sepulchre.

3. There lies the Scythian power, which about this time was busy in the world; Meshech and Tubal those barbarous northern nations had lately made a descent upon the Medes, and caused their terror among them, lived among them upon free quarter for some years, making every thing their own they could lay their hands on; but at length Cyaxeres king of the Medes drew them by a wile into his power, cut off abundance of them, and obliged them to quit his country, ver. 26. There lies Meshech and Tubal, and all their multitude; there is a burying place for them, with their chief commander in the midst of them, *all of them uncircumcised, slain by the sword*. These Scythians dying ingloriously as they lived, are not laid as the other nations spoken of before, in the bed of honour, ver. 27. They shall not lie with the mighty, shall not be buried in state as those are, even by consent of the enemy, that are slain in the field of battle, that go down to their grave with their weapons of war carried before the hearse, or trailed after it, that have particularly their swords laid under their heads, as if they could sleep the sweeter in the grave, when they laid their heads on such a pillow; these Scythians are not buried with these marks of honour, but their iniquities shall be upon their sons; they shall for their iniquity be left unburied; tho' they were the terror even of the mighty in the land of the living.

4. There lies the kingdom of Edom, which had flourished long, but about this time, at least before the destruction of Egypt, was made quite desolate, as was foretold, chap. xxv. 13. Among the sepulchres of the nations, there is Edom, ver. 29. There lie, not dignified with monuments or inscriptions, but mingled with common dust, her kings and all her princes, her wise statesmen (which Edom was famous for) and her brave soldiers; these with their might are laid by them that were slain by the sword; their might could not prevent it, nay their might helped to procure it, for that both encouraged them to engage in war, and incensed their neighbours against them, who thought it necessary to curb their growing greatness. A deal of pains they took to ruin themselves, as many do, who with their might, with all their might, are laid by them that were slain with the sword. The Edomites retained circumcision, being of the seed of Abraham. But that shall stand them in no stead, they shall lie with the uncircumcised.

5. There lie the princes of the north, and all the Zidonians. These were as well acquainted with maritime affairs, as the Egyptians were, who relied much upon that part of their strength, but they are gone down with the slain, ver. 30. down to the pit: Now they are ashamed of their might, ashamed to think how much they boasted of it, and trusted to it; and as the Edomites with their might, so these with their terror, are laid with them that are slain by the sword, and are forced to No. lxix.

take their lot with them. They bear their shame with them that go down to the pit, die in as much disgrace as those that are cut off by the hand of publick justice.

Lastly, All this is applied to Pharaoh, and the Egyptians, who have no reason to flatter themselves with hope of tranquillity, when they see how the wisest, and wealthiest, and strongest of their neighbours have been laid waste. Ver. 28. *See thou shalt be broken in the midst of the uncircumcised*; when God is pulling down the unhumiliated, and unreformed nations; thou must expect to come down with them. (1.) It will be some extenuation of the miseries of Egypt, to observe that it has been the case of so many great and mighty nations before; ver. 31. *Pharaoh shall see them, and be comforted*; it will be some ease to his mind, that he is not the first king that has been slain in battle; his, not the first army that has been routed; his, not the first kingdom that has been made desolate. Mr. Greenhill observes here, "That the comfort which wicked ones have after death is poor comfort, not real, but imaginary." They will find little satisfaction in having so many fellow-sufferers; the rich man in hell dreaded it. It is only in point of honour that Pharaoh can see and be comforted. (2.) But nothing will be an exemption from these miseries; for, ver. 32. *I have caused my terror in the land of the living*. Great men have caused their terror, have studied how to make every body fear them, *Oderint dum metuant*. But now the great God hath caused his terror in the land of the living; and therefore he laughs at theirs, because he sees that his day is coming, Psal. xxxvii. 13. In this day of terror Pharaoh and all his multitude shall be laid with them that are slain with the sword.

The view which this prophecy gives us of ruined states may shew us something, (1.) Of this present world, and the empire of death in it. Come and see the calamitous state of human life; see what a dying world this is; the strong die, the mighty die, Pharaoh and all his multitude. See what a killing world this is; they are all slain with the sword. As if men did not die fast enough of themselves, men are ingenious at finding out ways to destroy one another. It is not only a great pit, but a great cock-pit. (2.) Of the other world; tho' it is the destruction of nations as such, that perhaps is principally intended here; yet here is a plain allusion to the final and everlasting ruin of impenitent sinners; of those that are uncircumcised in heart; they are slain by the sword of divine justice; their iniquity is upon them, and with it they bear their shame. Those, Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them, shall be brought forth and slain before him; tho' they be as pompous, tho' they be as numerous as Pharaoh and all his multitude.

C H A P. XXXIII.

The prophet is now come off his circuit, which he went as judge in God's name, to try and pass sentence upon the neighbouring nations, and having finished with them, and read them all their doom in the eight chapters foregoing, he now returns to the children of his people; and receives further instructions what to say to them. (1.) He must let them know what office he was in among them as a prophet; that he was a watchman, and had received a charge concerning them, for which he was accountable, ver. 1—9. The substance of this we had before, chap. iii. 17, &c. (2.) He must let them know upon what terms they stand with God, that they were upon their trial, upon their good behaviour; that if a wicked man repent he shall not perish; but if a righteous man apostatize, he shall perish, ver. 10—20. (3.) Here is a particular message sent to those who yet remained in the land of Israel, and (which is very strange) grew secure there, and confident that they should take root there again, to tell them that their hopes would fail them, because they persisted in their sins, ver. 21—29. (4.) Here is a rebuke to those who personally attended Ezekiel's ministry, but were not sincere in their professions of devotion, ver. 30—33.

1. **A** GAIN the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: 3. If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; 4. Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. 5. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning, his blood shall be upon him: but he that taketh warning, shall deliver his soul. 6. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the

the trumpet, and the people be not warned: if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchmans hand. 7. ¶ So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. 8. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely dye; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall dye in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand. 9. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it: if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.

The prophet had been by express order from God taken off from prophesying to the Jews, just then when the news came that Jerusalem was invested, and close siege laid to it, chap. xxiv. 27. But now Jerusalem is taken, two years after, he is appointed again to direct his speech to them; and here his commission is renewed. If God had abandoned them quite, he would not have sent prophets to them; nor if he had not had mercy in store for them, would he have shewed them such things as these. In these verses we have,

1. The office of a watchman laid down, the trust reposed in him, the charge given him, and the conditions adjusted between him and those that employ him, ver. 2—6.

(1.) It is supposed to be a publick danger, that gives occasion for the appointing of a watchman, when God brings the sword upon a land, ver. 2. The sword of war whenever it comes upon a land is of God's bringing; it is the sword of the Lord, of his justice, how unjustly soever men draw it. At such a time when a country is in fear of a foreign invasion, that they may be informed of all the motions of the enemy, may not be surpris'd with an attack, but may have early notice of it, in order to their being at their arms, and in readiness to give the invader a warm reception, they set a man of their coast, some likely person, that lives upon the borders of their country, where the threatned danger is expected, and is therefore well acquainted with all the avenues of it, and make him their watchman. Thus wise are the children of this world in their generation. Note, One man may be of publick service to a whole country. Princes and statesmen are the watchmen of a kingdom, that are continually to employ themselves; and, if occasion be, as watchmen, to expose themselves for the publick safety.

(2.) It is supposed to be a publick trust that is lodged in the watchman, and that he is accountable to the publick for the discharge of it. His business is, (1.) To discover the approaches and advances of the enemy; and therefore he must not be blind or asleep, for then he cannot see the sword coming. (2.) To give notice of them immediately by sound of trumpet; or, as centinels among us, by the discharge of a gun, as a signal of danger. A special trust and confidence is reposed in him, by those that set him to be their watchman, that he will faithfully do these two things; and they venture their lives upon his fidelity. Now, (1.) If he do his part, if he be betimes aware of all the dangers that fall within his cognizance, and give warning of them, he has discharged his trust, and has not only delivered his soul, but earned his wages. If the people do not take warning, if they either will not believe the notice he gives them, will not believe the danger to be so great, or so near, as really it is, or will not regard it, and so are surpris'd by the enemy in their security, it is their own fault; the blame is not to be laid upon the watchman, but their blood is upon their own head. If any person goes presumptuously into the mouth of danger, tho' he heard the sound of the trumpet, and was told by it where the danger was, and so the sword comes, and takes him away in his folly, he is *felo de se*, foolish man, he has destroyed himself. But, (2.) If the watchman do not do his duty; if he might have seen the danger, and did not, but was asleep, or heedless, or looking another way; or if he did see the danger, (for so the case is put here) and shifted only for his own safety, and blew not the trumpet to warn the people; so that some are surpris'd and cut off in their iniquity, ver. 6. cut off suddenly without having time to cry, Lord, have mercy upon me, time to repent and make their peace with God; which makes the matter much the worse, that the poor creature is taken away in his iniquity. But his blood shall be required at the watchman's hand; he shall be found guilty of his death, because he did not give him warning of his danger. But if the watchman do his part, and the people do theirs, all is well; both he that gives warning, and he that takes warning, has delivered his soul.

2. The application of this to the prophet, ver. 7, 8, 9. 1. He is a watchman to the house of Israel. He had occasionally given warning to the nations about, but to the house of Israel, he was a watchman by office, for they were the chil-

dren of the prophets and the covenant. They did not set him for a watchman, as the people of the land did, ver. 2. For they were not so wise for their souls to secure the welfare of them, as they would have been for the protection of their temporal interests: But God did it for them; he appointed them a watchman. 2. His business as a watchman is to give warning to sinners of their misery and danger by reason of sin. This is the word he must hear from God's mouth; and speak to them. (1.) God hath said, That the wicked man shall surely die; he shall be miserable; unless he repent he shall be cut off from God, and all comfort and hope in him; shall be cut off from all good. He shall fall and lie for ever under the wrath of God, which is the death of the soul, as his favour is its life. The righteous God hath said it, and will never unsay it, nor can all the world gainsay it, that the wages of sin is death: Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, not only against wicked nations, speaking ruin to them as nations, but against wicked persons, speaking ruin to them in their personal capacity, their personal interests which pass into the other world, and last to eternity, as national interests do not. (2.) It is the will of God that the wicked man should be warned of this; warn them from me; which intimates that there is a possibility of preventing it, else it were a jest to give warning of it; nay, and that God is desirous it should be prevented. Sinners are therefore warned of the wrath to come, that they may flee from it, Mat. iii. 7. (3.) It is the work of ministers, to give him warning; to say to the wicked it shall be ill with them, Isa. iii. 11. God saith in general, The soul that sinneth it shall die: The minister's business is to apply this to particular persons, and to say, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, whoever thou art, if thou go on still in thy trespasses, they will inevitably be thy ruin: O adulterer, O robber, O drunkard, O swearer, O sabbath-breaker, thou shalt surely die. And he must say this, not in passion, to provoke the sinner, but in compassion, to warn the wicked from his way, warn him to turn from it, that he may live. This is to be done by the faithful preaching of the word in publick, and by personal application to those whose sins are open.

3. If souls perish through his neglect of his duty, he brings guilt upon himself; if the prophet do not warn the wicked of the ruin that is at the end of his wicked way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; for tho' the watchman did not do his part, yet the sinner might have taken warning from the written word, from his own conscience, and from God's judgments upon others, by which his mouth shall be stopped, and God will be justified in his destruction. Note, It will not serve impenitent sinners to plead in the great day, that their watchmen did not give them warning, that they were careless and unfaithful; for tho' they were so, it will be made to appear that God left not himself without witness. But he shall not perish alone in his iniquity, the watchman also shall be called to an account, his blood will I require at thy hand. The blind leader shall fall with the blind follower into the ditch. See what a desire God has of the salvation of sinners, in that he resents it so ill, if those concerned do not what they can to prevent their destruction. And see what a great deal those ministers have to answer for another day, who palliate sin, and flatter sinners in their evil way, and by their wicked lives countenance and harden them in their wickedness, and encourage them to believe they shall have peace, tho' they go on.

4. If he do his duty, he may take the comfort of it, tho' he do not see the success of it; ver. 9. If thou warn the wicked of his way, if thou tell him faithfully what will be the end thereof, and call him earnestly to turn from it, and he do not turn, but persist in it, he shall die in his iniquity, and the fair warning given him will be an aggravation of his sin and ruin, but thou hast delivered thy soul. Note, It is a comfort to ministers that they may through grace save themselves, tho' they cannot be instrumental to save so many, as they wish, of those that hear them.

10. ¶ Therefore, O thou son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? 11. Say unto them, As I live saith the Lord G O D, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye dye, O house of Israel? 12. Therefore, thou son of man, say unto the children of thy people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his righteousness in the day that he sinneth. 13. When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely

surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity; all his righteousness shall not be remembered, but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. 14. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die: if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; 15. If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed, shall be mentioned unto him: he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. 17. ¶ Yet the children of thy people say, the way of the LORD is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. 18. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. 19. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby. 20. Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal: O ye house of Israel, I will judge you every one after his ways.

These verses are the substance of what we had before, chap. xviii. 20, &c. and they are so full and express a declaration of the terms on which people stand with God, as the former were of the terms on which ministers stand; that it is no wonder they are here repeated, as those were, tho' we had the substance of them before. Observe here,

1. The cavils of the people against God's proceedings with them. God was now in his providence contending with them, but their uncircumcised hearts were not as yet humbled, for they were industrious to justify themselves, tho' thereby they reflected on God. Two things they insisted upon in their reproaches of God, and in both they added iniquity to their sin, and misery to their punishment.

(1.) They quarrelled with his promises and favours, as having no kindness or sincerity in them. Ver. 10. God had set life before them, but they plead that he had set it out of their reach, and therefore did but mock them with the mention of it. The prophet had said some time ago, chap. xxiv. 23. *Ye shall pine away for your iniquities*; with that word he had concluded his threatnings against Judah and Jerusalem; and this they now upbraided him with, as if it had been spoken absolutely to drive them to despair; whereas it was spoken conditionally to bring them to repentance. Thus are the sayings of God's ministers perverted by men of corrupt minds, who are minded to pick quarrels. He puts them in hopes of life and happiness, and here-in they would make him contradict himself; for (say they) *if our transgressions and our sins be upon us*, as thou hast often told us they are; and if we must, as thou sayest, *pine away in them*; and wear out a miserable captivity in a fruitless repentance, *how shall we then live?* If this be our doom, there is no remedy, *We die, we perish, we all perish*. Note, It is very common for those that have been hardened with presumption, when they were warned against sin, to sink into despair, when they are called to repent, and to conclude there is no hope of life for them.

(2.) They quarrelled with his threatnings and judgments, as having no justice or equity in them. They said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*, ver. 17. And again ver. 20. suggesting that God was partial in his proceedings, and that with him there was respect of persons, and he was more severe against sin and sinners than there was cause.

2. Here is a satisfactory answer given to both these cavils.

1. Those that *despaired of finding mercy* with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of God's readiness to shew mercy. Ver. 11. When they spoke of *pinning away in their iniquity*, God sends the prophet to them with all speed to tell them, that tho' their case was sad, yet it was not desperate, but there was yet *hope in Israel*. (1.) It is certain that God has no delight in the ruin of sinners, nor doth he deserve it; if they will destroy themselves, he will glorify himself in it, but he has no displeasure in it; but would rather they should *turn and live*, for his goodness is that attribute of his which is most his glory, which is most his delight. He would rather sinners should turn and live, than go on and die. He hath said it, He hath sworn it; that by these two immutable things, in both which it is impossible for God to ye, we might have strong consolation; we have his word and his oath; and since he could *swear by no greater, he swears by himself*; *As I live*. They questioned whether they should *live*, tho' they did repent, and reform; yea, saith God, *As sure as I live*, true penitents shall live also; for *their life is hid with Christ in God*. (2.) It is certain that God is sincere and in earnest in the calls he gives sinners to repent; Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way. To repent, is to *turn from our evil way*; This God requires sinners to do; this he urgeth them to do, by repeated pressing instances, *Turn ye, turn*

ye: O that they would be prevailed with to turn, to turn quickly, without delay! This he will enable them to do, if they will but *frame their doings to turn to the Lord*, Hos. v. 4. For he hath said, *I will pour out my spirit unto you*, Prov. i. 23. And in this he will accept of them; for it is not only what he commands, but what he courts them to. (3.) It is certain, that if sinners perish in their impenitency, it is long of themselves; they die, because they will die; and herein they act most absurdly and unreasonably, *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* God would have heard them, and they would not be heard.

2. Those that *despaired of finding justice* with God, are here answered with a solemn declaration of the rule of judgment, which God would go by in dealing with the children of men, which carries along with it the evidence of its own equity; he that runs may read the justice of it. The Jewish nation, as a nation, was now *dead*, it was ruined to all intents and purposes. The prophet must therefore deal with particular persons, and the rule of judging concerning them is much like that concerning a nation, Jer. xviii. 7, 8, 9, 10. If God speak concerning it to build and to plant; if it do wickedly, he will recal his favours, and leave it to ruin: But if he speak concerning it to pluck up and destroy, and it repent, he will revoke the sentence, and deliver it: So it is here. In short, The most plausible professors, if they apostatize, shall certainly *perish for ever* in their apostasy from God. And the most notorious sinners, if they repent, shall certainly be *happy for ever* in their return to God. This is here repeated again and again, because it ought to be again and again considered, and preached over to our own hearts. This was necessary to be inculcated upon this stupid, senseless people that said, *The way of the Lord is not equal*; for these rules of judgment are so plainly just, that they need no other confirmation of them, but the repetition of them.

1. If those that have made a great profession of religion, throw off their profession, quit the good ways of God, and grow loose, and carnal, and sensual, and worldly, the profession they made, and all the religious performances with which they had for a great while kept up the credit of their profession, shall stand them in no stead, but they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, ver. 12, 13, 18.

(1.) God doth say to the *righteous man* that *he shall surely live*, ver. 13. He saith it by his word, by his ministers; he that lives regularly, his own heart tells him, his neighbours tell him, He shall live: Sure such a man as this cannot but be happy. And it is certain, if he proceed and persevere in his righteousness, and if in order to that he be upright and sincere in it, if he be really as good as he seems to be, he shall live; he shall continue in the love of God, and be for ever happy in that love.

(2.) Righteous men that have very good hopes of themselves, and that others have a very good opinion of, yet are in danger of *turning to iniquity* by *trusting to their righteousness*. So the case is put here, *If he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity*, and come to make a trade of sin; if he not only take a false step, but turn aside into a false way, and persist in it; this may possibly be the case of a righteous man, and it is the effect of his trusting to his own righteousness. Note, Many eminent professors have been ruined by a proud conceit of themselves, and confidence in themselves. He trusts to the merit of his own righteousness, and thinks he has already made God so much his debtor, that now he may venture to *commit iniquity*, for he has righteousness enough in stock to make amends for it; he fancies that whatever ill deeds he may do hereafter, he can be in no danger by them, having so many good deeds before-hand to balance them. Or, He trusts to the strength of his own righteousness; thinks himself now so well established in a course of virtue, that he may thrust himself into any temptation, and it cannot overcome him, and so by presuming on his own sufficiency he is brought to commit iniquity. By making bold on *the confines of sin*, he is drawn at length into the *depths of hell*. This ruined the Pharisees, they *trusted to themselves that they were righteous*; and that their long prayers, and fasting twice in the week, would atone for their devouring widows houses.

(3.) If righteous men *turn to iniquity*, and return not to their righteousness, they shall certainly perish in their iniquity, and all the righteousness they have formerly done, all their prayers, and all their alms, shall be forgotten, no mention shall be made, no remembrance had of their good deeds, they shall be overlooked, as if they had never been. *The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him* from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law *in the day of his transgression*. When he becomes a traitor and a rebel, and takes up arms against his rightful sovereign, it will not serve for him to plead in his own defence that formerly he was a loyal subject, and did many good services to the government: No, *he shall not be able to live*; the remembrance of his former righteousness shall be no satisfaction either to God's justice or his own conscience, *in the day that he sinneth*; but rather shall to both highly aggravate the sin and folly of his apostasy. And therefore *for his iniquity that he committed he shall die*, ver. 13. And again, ver. 18. *He shall even die thereby*; and it is long of himself.

2. If those that have lived a wicked life, repent, and reform, forsake their wicked ways and become religious, their sins shall be pardoned, and they shall be justified and saved, if they persevere in their reformation.

(1.) God saith to the wicked, *Thou shalt surely die*. The way that thou art in leads to destruction: The wages of thy sin is death, and thine iniquity will shortly be thy ruin. It was said to the righteous man, *Thou shalt surely live*, for his encouragement to proceed and persevere in the way of righteousness, but he made an ill use of it, and was emboldened by it to commit iniquity. It was said to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die*, for warning to him not to persist in his wicked ways. And he makes a good use of it, and is quickened thereby to return to God and duty. Thus, even the threatenings of the word are to some, by the grace of God, a favour of life unto life, while even the promises of the word become to others, by their own corruption, a favour of death unto death. When God saith to the wicked man, *Thou shalt surely die, die eternally*, it is not to frighten him out of his wits, but to frighten him out of his sins.

(2.) There is many a wicked man that was hastning apace to his own destruction, who yet is wrought upon by the grace of God to return and repent, and live a holy life. He turns from his sin, ver. 14. and is resolved he will have no more to do with it; and as an evidence of his repentance for wrong done, he restores the pledge, ver. 15. which he had taken uncharitably from the poor; he gives again that which he had robbed, and taken unjustly from the rich. Nor doth he only cease to do evil, but he learns to do well; he doth that which is lawful and right, and makes conscience of his duty both to God and man. A great change! since a while ago he neither feared God nor regarded man. But many such amazing changes, and blessed ones, have been wrought by the power of divine grace; he that was going on in the paths of death and the destroyer, now walks in the statutes of life, in the way of God's commandments, which has both life in it, Prov. xii. 28. and life at the end of it, Matt. xix. 17. And in this good way he perseveres without committing iniquity; though not free from remaining infirmity, yet under the dominion of no iniquity. He repents not of his repentance, nor returns to the commission of those gross sins he before allowed himself in.

(3.) He that doth thus repent and return shall escape the ruin he was running into, and his former sins shall be no prejudice to his acceptance with God: Let him not pine away in his iniquity, for if he confess and forsake it he shall find mercy. He shall surely live, he shall not die, ver. 15. Again, ver. 16. He shall surely live: Again, ver. 19. He hath done that which is lawful and right, and he shall live thereby. But will not his wickedness be remembered against him? No, he shall not be punished for them, ver. 12. As for the wickedness of the wicked, though it was very heinous, yet he shall not fall thereby, in the day that he turneth from his wickedness. Now it is become his grief it shall not be his ruin. Now there is a settled separation between him and sin; there shall be no longer a separation between him and God. Nay, he shall not be so much as upbraided with them, ver. 16. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him, either as a clog to his pardon, or an allay to the comfort of it, or any blemish and diminution to the glory that is prepared for him.

Now lay all this together, and then judge, whether the way of the Lord be not equal; whether this will not justify God in the destruction of sinners, and glorify him in the salvation of penitents. The conclusion of the whole matter is, ver. 20. O ye house of Israel, though you are all involved now in the common calamity, yet there shall be a distinction of persons made, in the spiritual and eternal state, and I will judge you every one after his ways. Though they were sent into captivity by the lump, good fish and bad inclosed in the same net, yet there he will separate between the precious and the vile, and will render to every man according to his works. Therefore, God's way is equal, and exceptionable; but as for the children of thy people God turns them over to the prophet, as he did to Moses, Exod. xxxii. 7. they are thy people, I can scarce own them for mine; as for them their way is unequal; this way they have got of quarrelling with God and his prophets is absurd and unreasonable. In all disputes between God and his creatures, it will certainly be found that he is in the right, and they are in the wrong.

21. ¶ And it came to pass in the twelfth year of our captivity, in the tenth month, in the fifth day of the month, that one that had escaped out of Jerusalem, came unto me, saying, The city is smitten. 22. Now the hand of the LORD was upon me in the evening, afore he that was escaped came; and had opened my mouth until he came to me in the morning, and my mouth was opened, and I was no more dumb. 23. Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 24. Son of man, they that inhabit those wastes of the land of Israel, speak, saying, Abraham was one, and he inherited the land: but

we are many, the land is given us for inheritance. 25. Wherefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Ye eat with the blood, and lift up your eyes toward your idols, and shed blood; and shall ye possess the land? 26. Ye stand upon your sword, ye work abomination, and ye defile every one his neighbours wife; and shall ye possess the land? 27. Say thou thus unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, As I live, surely, they that are in the wastes shall fall by the sword, and him that is in the open field will I give to the beasts to be devoured: and they that be in the forts and in the caves, shall die of the pestilence. 28. For I will lay the land most desolate, and the pomp of her strength shall cease: and the mountains of Israel shall be desolate, that none shall pass through. 29. Then shall they know that I am the LORD, when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

Here is, 1. The tidings brought to Ezekiel of the burning of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. The city was burnt in the eleventh year of the captivity, and of the fifth month, Jer. lii. 12, 13. Tidings hereof were brought to the prophet by one that was an eye-witness of the destruction, in the twelfth year, and the tenth month, ver. 21. which was a year and almost five months after the thing was done; we may well suppose that there being a constant correspondence at this time, more than ever kept up between Jerusalem and Babylon, he had heard the news long before. But this was the first time he had an account of it from a refugee, from one that escaped, who could be particular, and would be *pathetical* in the narrative of it. And the sign given him was the coming of such a one to him as had himself narrowly escaped the flames, chap. xxiv. 26. He that escapeth in that day, shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears, to hear it more distinctly than ever from one that could say, *quæque ipse miserrima vidi*.

2. The divine impressions and influences he was under to prepare him for those heavy tidings, ver. 22. The hand of the Lord was upon me before he came, and had opened my mouth to speak to the house of Israel what we had in the former part of this chapter, and now he was no more dumb, he prophesied now with more freedom and boldness, being by the event proved a true prophet to the confusion of those that contradicted him. All the prophecies from chap. xxiv. to this chapter, having relation purely to the nations about, it is probable the prophet, when he received them from the Lord, did not deliver them by word of mouth, but in writing; for he could not otherwise say to the Ammonites, Say unto Tyrus, say unto Pharaoh, &c. so and so, but by letters directed to the persons concerned; like Zacharias, when he could not speak, he wrote; and herein he was as truly executing his prophetic office as ever. Note, Even silenced ministers may be doing a great deal of good, by writing letters, and making visits. But now the prophet's mouth is opened, that he may speak to the children of his people. It is probable he had, during these three years, been continually speaking to them as a friend, putting them in mind of what he had formerly delivered to them, but never spoke to them as a prophet, by inspiration till now, when the hand of the Lord came upon him, renewed his commission, gave him fresh instructions, and opened his mouth, furnished him with power to speak to the people as he ought to speak.

3. The particular message he was intrusted with, relating to these Jews that yet remained in the land of Israel, and inhabited the wastes of that land, ver. 24. see what work sin had made; the cities of Israel were now become the wastes of Israel, for they lay all in ruins; some few that had escaped the sword and captivity still continued there, and began to think of re-settling. This was so long after the destruction of Jerusalem, that it was some time before this that Gedaliah (a modest humble man) and his friends were slain; but probably at this time Johanan, and the proud men that joined with him were at the height, Jer. xlii. 2. and before they came to a resolution to go into Egypt, wherein Jeremiah comforted them, it is probable the project was to establish themselves in the wastes of the land of Israel, in which Ezekiel here comforted them, and probably dispatched the message away by the person that brought him the news of Jerusalem's destruction. Or, perhaps, those here prophesied against might be some other party of Jews that remained in the land, hoped to take root there, and to be sole masters of it, after Johanan and his forces were gone into Egypt.

Now here we have,

1. An account of the pride of these remaining Jews, who dwell in the wastes of the land of Israel. Though the providence of God concerning them had been very humbling, and still were a very threatening, yet they were intolerably haughty and secure, and promised themselves peace. He that brought the news to the prophet, that Jerusalem was smitten, could not tell him (it is likely) what these people said, but God tells him, they say, the land

land is given us for our inheritance, ver. 24. Our partners being gone, it is now all our own by survivorship; or for want of heirs, it comes to us as occupants; we shall now be placed alone in the midst of the earth, and have it all to our selves. This argues great stupidity under the weighty hand of God, and a reigning selfishness, and narrow-spiritedness; they pleased themselves in the ruin of their country, as long as they hoped to find their own account in it; cared not though it were all waste, so that they might have the sole property; a poor inheritance to be proud of! They have the impudence to compare their case with Abraham's glorying in this, that *we have Abraham to our father*; Abraham, say they, *was one, one family, and he inherited the land*, and lived many years in the peaceable enjoyment of it; but *we are many, many families, more numerous than he, the land is given us for inheritance*. (1.) They think they can make out as good a title from God to this land, as Abraham could. If God gave this land to him that was but one worshipper of him as a reward of his service, much more will he give it to us who are many worshippers of him, as the reward of our service; and this speaks the great conceit they had of their own merits, as if they were greater than those of Abraham their father, who yet was not justified by works. (2.) They think they can make good the possession of this land against the Chaldeans, and all other invaders, as well as Abraham could against those that were competitors with him for it. If he that was but one could hold it, much more shall we that are many, and have many more at command than his three hundred trained servants. This speaks the confidence they had in their own might; they had got possession, and were resolved to keep it.

2. A check to this pride. Since God's providences did neither humble them, nor terrify them, he sends them a message sufficient to do both.

1. To humble them he tells them of the wickedness they still persisted in, which rendered them utterly unworthy to possess this land, so that they could not expect God should give it them. They had been followed with one judgment after another, but they had not profited by those means of grace so as might be expected; they were still unreformed, and how could they expect that they should possess the land; *shall ye possess the land?* what such wicked people as ye are? *How shall I put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land?* Jer. iii. 19. Surely you never reflect upon your selves, else you would rather wonder that you are in the land of the living, than expect to possess this land. For do you not know how bad you are? (1.) You make no conscience of forbidden fruit; forbidden food, *you eat with the blood*, directly contrary to one of the precepts given to Noah and his sons, then when God gave them possession of the earth, Gen. ix. 4. (2.) Idolatry, that covenant-breaking sin, that sin which the jealous God has been in a particular manner provoked by to lay your country waste, is still the sin that most easily besets you, and which you have a strong inclination to. *You lift up your eyes towards your idols*, which is a sign that tho' perhaps you do not bow your knee to them so much as you have done, yet you set your hearts upon them, and hanker after them. (3.) You are as fierce and cruel, and barbarous as ever, *you shed blood*, innocent blood. (4.) You confide in your own strength, your own arm, your own bow, and have no dependence on, or regard to God and his providence; *ye stand upon your sword*, ver. 26—you think to carry all before you, and make all your own, by force of arms. How can they expect the inheritance of Isaac (as these did) who are of Ishmael's disposition, that had his hand against every man? Gen. xvi. 12. and Esau's resolution to live by his sword? Gen. xxvii. 40. We met with those, chap. xxxii. 27. who when they died thought they could not lie easy under ground, unless they had their swords under their heads. Here we meet with those who, while they live, think they cannot stand firm above ground, unless they have their swords under their feet, as if swords were both the softest pillows, and the strongest pillars, tho' it was sin, it was sin, that first drew the sword; but blessed be God, there are those who know better things, that stand upon the support of the divine power and promise, and lay their heads in the bosom of divine love, not trusting in their own sword, Psal. xlv. 3. (5.) You are guilty of all manner of abominations, and particularly *ye defile every one his neighbour's wife*, which is an abomination of the first magnitude; and *shall ye possess the land?* What, such vile miscreants as you? Note, They cannot expect to possess the land, not to enjoy any true comfort or happiness here or hereafter, that live in rebellion against the Lord.

2. To terrify them he tells them of the further judgments God had in store for them, which should make them utterly unable to possess this land, so that they could not stand it out against the enemy. Do they say they shall possess the land? No, God hath said it, he hath sworn it, *As I live, saith the Lord*. Tho' he has sworn that he delights not in the death of sinners, yet he hath sworn also, that those who persist in impenitency and unbelief, *shall not enter into his rest*. (1.) They that are in the cities, here called the wastes, shall fall by the sword, either by the sword of the Chaldeans, who come to avenge the murder of Gedaliah, or by one another's swords, in their intestine broils. (2.) They that are in the open field shall be

devoured by wild beasts, which swarmed of course in the country when it was dispeopled, and there were none to master them, and keep them under, *Exod. xxiii. 29*. When the army of the enemy had quitted the country, yet still there was no safety in it. *Noisome beasts* was one of the four sore judgments, chap. xiv. 15. (3.) They that be in the forts and in the caves, that think themselves safe in artificial or natural fastnesses, because mens eyes cannot discover them, nor mens darts reach them, there the arrows of the Almighty shall find them out; they shall die of the pestilence. (4.) The whole land, even the land of Israel that had been the glory of all lands, shall be most desolate, ver. 28. *It shall be desolation, desolation*, all over as desolate as desolation it self can make it. The mountains of Israel, the fruitful mountains, Zion it self, the holy mountain not excepted, shall be desolate, the roads unfrequented, the houses uninhabited, that none shall pass through; as it was threatned, *Deut. xxviii. 62. ye shall be left few in number*. (5.) The pomp of her strength, whatever she glories in as her pomp, and trusts to as her strength, it shall be made to cease. (6.) The cause of all this was very bad; it is for all their abominations which they have committed. It is sin that doth all this mischief, that makes nations desolate, and therefore we ought to call it an abomination. (7.) Yet the effect of all this will be very good. *Then shall they know that I am the Lord*, am their Lord, and shall return to their allegiance; *when I have made the land most desolate*. Those are untractable, unteachable indeed, that are not made to know their dependence upon God, when all their creature-comforts fail them, and are made desolate.

30. ¶ Also thou son of man, the children of thy people still are talking against thee by the walls, and in the doors of the houses, and speak one to another, every one to his brother, saying, Come, I pray you, and hear what is the word that cometh forth from the LORD. 31. And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness. 32. And lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument: for they hear thy words, but they do them not. 33. And when this cometh to pass (lo it will come) then shall they know that a prophet hath been among them.

The foregoing verses spoke conviction to the Jews who remained in the land of Israel, who were monuments of sparing mercy, and yet returned not to the Lord; in these verses those are reproved who were now in captivity in Babylon under divine rebukes, and yet were not reformed by them. They are not indeed charged with the same gross enormities that the other are charged with. They made some shew of religion and devotion. But their hearts were not right with God. The thing they are here accused of, is *mocking the messengers of the Lord*; one of their measure-filling sins, which brought this ruin upon them, and yet they were not cured of it.

Two ways they mocked the prophet Ezekiel;

1. By *invidious, ill-natured reflections upon him*, privately among themselves, endeavouring by all means possible to render him despicable. The prophet did not know it, but charitably thought that they who spoke so well to him, to his face, with so much seeming respect and deference, surely would not speak ill of him behind his back; but God comes and tells him, *the children of thy people are still talking against thee*, ver. 30. or *talking of thee*, no good, I doubt. Note, Publick persons are a common theme, or subject of discourse; every one takes a liberty to censure them at pleasure; and faithful ministers know not how much ill is said of them every day; it is well they do not; for if they did, it might prove a discouragement to them in their work, not to be easily got over. But God takes notice of all that is said against his ministers; not only what is decreed against them, or sworn against them, not only what is written against them, or spoken with solemnity and deliberation, but of what is said against them in common talk, among neighbours when they meet in an evening, by the walls and in the doors of their houses; where whatever freedom of speech they use, if they reproach and slander any of God's ministers, God will reckon with them for it; his prophets shall not be made the song of the drunkards always. They had no crime to lay to the prophets charge, but they loved to talk of him in a careless scornful bantering way; they said jokingly, *come, and let us hear what is the word that cometh forth from the Lord*; perhaps it will be something new, and will entertain us and furnish us with matter of discourse. Note, Those have arrived to a great pitch of profaneness, that can make so great a privilege, and so great a duty, as the preaching and hearing of the word of God, a matter of sport and ridicule; yea tho' it be not done publickly, but in private conversation,

tion, among themselves. Serious things should be spoken of seriously.

2. By *dissembling with him* in their attendance upon his ministry. Hypocrites mock God, and mock his prophets. But their hypocrisy is open before God, and the day is coming when, as here, it will be laid open. Observe here,

1. The plausible profession which these people made, and the speciousness of their pretensions. They are like those, *Mat. xv. 8. who draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, but their hearts are far from him.* (1.) They were diligent and constant in their attendance upon the means of grace. *They come unto thee as the people cometh.* In Babylon they had no temple or synagogue, but they went to the prophet's house, *chap. viii. 1.* and there, it is probable, they spent their *new-moons and their sabbaths*, in religious exercises, *2 Kings iv. 23.* When the prophet was bound, the word of the Lord was not bound; and the people when they had not the help for their souls they wished for, were thankful for what they had, it was a reviving in their bondage. Now these hypocrites came according to the coming of the people, as duly, and as early, as any of the prophet's hearers. Their being said to come, *as the people came*, seems to intimate that the reason why they came, was, because other people came; they did not come out of conscience towards God, but only for company, for fashion-sake, and because it was now the custom of their countrymen. Note, Those that have no inward principle of love to God's ordinances, may yet be found much in the external observation of them. Cain brought his sacrifice as well as Abel; and the Pharisee went up to the temple to pray as well as the publican. (2.) They behaved themselves very decently and reverently in the publick assembly; there was none of them whispering or laughing, or gazing about them, or sleeping. But *they sit before thee as my people*, with all the shews of gravity and serenity, and composure of mind. They sit out the time without weariness, or wishing the sermon done. (3.) They were very attentive to the word preached; they are not thinking of something else, but they *hear thy words*, and take notice of what thou sayest. (4.) They pretended to have a great kindness and respect for the prophet. Tho' behind his back they could not give him a good word, yet to his face they shewed much love to him and his doctrine; they pretended to have a great concern, lest he should spend himself too much in preaching, or expose himself to the Chaldeans; for they would be thought to be some of his best friends, and well-wishers. (5.) They took a great deal of pleasure in the word; they *delighted to know God's word*, *Isa. lviii. 2.* "Herod heard John Baptist gladly," *Mark vi. 20.* *Thou art unto them as a very lovely song.* Ezekiel's matter was surprizing, his language fine, his expressions elegant, his similitudes apt, his voice tunable, and his delivery graceful; so that they could sit with as much pleasure to hear him preach, as (if I may speak in the language of our times) to see a play or an opera, or to hear a consort of musick. Ezekiel was to them as one *that had a pleasant voice*, and could sing well, or *play well on an instrument.* Note, It is possible men may have their fancies pleased by the word, and yet not have their consciences touched, nor their hearts changed; the itching ear gratified, and yet not the corrupt nature sanctified.

2. The hypocrisy of these professions and pretensions; it is all a sham, it is all a jest. (1.) They have no cordial affection for the word of God. While they *shew much love*, it is only *with the mouth*, from the teeth outward, but *their heart goes after their covetousness*, they are as much set upon the world as ever, as much in love and league with it as ever. Hearing the word is only their diversion and recreation, a pretty amusement now and then for an hour or two. But still their main business is with their farm and merchandise, the bent and bias of their souls is towards them, and their *inward thoughts* are employed in projects about them. Note, Covetousness is the ruining sin of multitudes that make a great profession of religion; it is the love of the world that secretly eats the love of God out of their hearts; the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches are the thorns that choke the seed, and choke the soul too. And those neither please God nor profit themselves, who when they are hearing the word of God, are musing upon their worldly affairs. God has his eye on the hearts that do so. (2.) They yield no subjection to it. They *hear thy words*, but it is only a hearing that they give thee, for they will not do them, *ver. 31.* And again, *ver. 37.* *They do them not.* They will not be persuaded by all the prophet can say, either by authority or argument, to cross themselves in any instance, to part with any one beloved sin, or apply themselves to any one duty that is against the grain to flesh and blood. Note, There are many who take pleasure in hearing the word, but make no conscience of doing it; and so they build upon the sand, and deceive themselves.

Lastly, Let us see what will be in the end hereof. *Shall their unbelief, and carelessness, make the word of God of none effect?* By no means. (1.) God will confirm the prophet's word, tho' they *contemn it*, and make light of it, *ver. 33.* What he saith will come to pass, and not one jot or one tittle shall fall to the ground. Note, The curses of the law, tho' they may be bantered by profane wits, yet they cannot be baffled. (2.) They themselves shall rue their folly when it is too late. When it

comes to pass they shall know, shall know to their cost, know to their confusion, that *a prophet has been among them*, tho' they made no more of him than as one that had a pleasant voice. Note, Those who will not consider that a prophet is among them, and improve not the day of their visitation while it is continued, will be made to remember that a prophet has been among them, when the things that belong to their peace are hid from their eyes. The day is coming when vain and worldly men will have other thoughts of things than now they have; and will feel a weight in that which they made light of. They shall know a prophet has been among them, when they see the event exactly answer the prediction, and the prophet himself shall be a witness against them, that they had fair warning given them, but would not take it. When Ezekiel is gone, whom now they speak against, and there is no more any prophet, nor any to shew them how long, then they will remember that once they had a prophet, but knew not how to use him well. Note, Those that will not know the worth of mercies by the improvement of them, will justly be made to know the worth of them by the want of them. As they who should desire to see one of the days of the son of man, which now they slighted, and might not see it.

C H A P. XXXIV.

The iniquities and calamities of God's Israel had been largely and pathetically lamented before in this book. Now in this chapter the shepherds of Israel, their rulers both in the church and state, are called to an account, as having been very much accessory to the sin and ruin of Israel, by their neglect to do the duty of their place. Here is, (1.) A high charge exhibited against them for their negligence, their unskilfulness, and unfaithfulness in the management of publick affairs, *ver. 1—6.* And again, *ver. 8.* (2.) Their discharge from their trust for their insufficiency and treachery, *ver. 7—10.* (3.) A gracious promise that God would take care of his flock, tho' they did not, and that it should not always suffer as it had done by their male-administrations, *ver. 11—16.* (4.) Another charge exhibited against those of the flock that were fat and strong, for the injuries they did to those that were weak and feeble, *ver. 17—22.* (5.) Another promise, that God would in the fulness of time send the Messiah, to be the great and good shepherd of the sheep, who should redress all grievances, and set every thing to rights with the flock, *ver. 23—31.*

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds, Wo be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves: should not the shepherds feed the flocks? 3. Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. 4. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. 5. And they were scattered because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. 6. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.

The prophecy of this chapter is not dated, nor any of those that follow it, till chap. xl. It is most probable it was delivered after the compleating of Jerusalem's destruction, when it would be very seasonable to enquire into the causes of it.

1. The prophet is ordered to prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. The princes and magistrates, the priests and Levites, the great Sanhedrim, or council of state, or whoever they were that had the conduct of publick affairs, in a higher or lower sphere; the kings especially, for there were two of them now captives in Babylon, who, as well as the people, must have their transgressions shewed them, that they might repent, as Manasseh in his captivity. God has something to say to the shepherds, for they are but under-shepherds, accountable to him who is the great Shepherd of Israel, *Psal. lxxx. 1.* And that which he saith is, *Wo to the shepherds of Israel*; tho' they are shepherds, and shepherds of Israel, yet he must not spare them, must not flatter them. Note, If mens dignity and power doth not, as it ought, keep them from sin, it will not serve to exempt them from reproof, to excuse their repentance,

ance, or to secure them from the judgments of God, if they do not repent. We had a *wo to the pastors*, Jer. xxiii. 1. God will in a particular manner reckon with them if they be false to their trust.

2. He is here directed what to charge the shepherds with in God's name, as the ground of God's controversy with them; for it is not a causeless quarrel. Two things they are charged with.

1. That all their care was to advance and enrich themselves, and to make themselves great. Their business was to take care of those that were committed to their charge: *Should not the shepherds feed the flocks?* No doubt they should, they betray their trust if they do not; not that they are to put the meat into their mouths, but to provide it for them, and to bring them to it. But *these* shepherds made this the least of their care; they *fed themselves*, contrived every thing to gratify and indulge their own appetite, and to make themselves rich and great, fat and easy. They made sure the profits of their places, they did *eat the fat, the cream*; so some; for *he that feeds a flock eats of the milk of it*, 1 Cor. ix. 7. and they made sure the best of the milk. They made sure the fleece, and *clothed themselves with the wool*, getting into their hands as much as they could of the estates of their subjects, yea, and *killed them that were well fed*, that what they had might be fed upon, as Naboth was put to death for his vineyard. Note, There is a *wo* to those who are in publick trust, but consult only their own private interest, and are more inquisitive about the benefice than about the office, what money is to be got than what good to be done. It is an old complaint, *all seek their own*, and too many *more than their own*.

2. That they took no care for the benefit and welfare of those that were committed to their charge. *Ye feed not the flock*. They neither knew how to do it, so ignorant were they, nor would they take any pains to do it, so *lazy* and *stupid* were they; nay, they never desired or designed it, so *treacherous* and *unfaithful* were they.

1. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *distempered*, did not *strengthen* them or *heal* them, or *bind* them up, ver. 4. When any of the flock were sick or hurt, worried or wounded, it was all one to them whether they lived or died, they never looked after them. The princes and judges took no care to right those that suffered wrong, or to shelter injured innocency. They took no care of the poor to see them provided for; they might starve for them. The priests took no care to instruct the ignorant, to rectify the mistakes of those that were in error; to warn the unruly, or to comfort the feeble-minded. The ministers of state took no care to check the growing distempers of the kingdom, which threatened the vitals of it. Things were amiss and out of course every where, and nothing was done to rectify them.

2. They did not do their duty to those of the flock that were *dispersed*; that were *driven away* by the enemies that invaded the country, and were forced to seek for shelter where they could find a place; or that *wandered* of choice upon the *mountains and hills*, ver. 6. where they were exposed to the beasts of prey, and became *meat to them*, ver. 5. Every one is ready to seize a waif and stray. Some went abroad and begged, some went abroad and traded, and thus the country waxed thin of inhabitants, and was weakened and impoverished, and wanted hands both in the fields of corn, and in the fields of battle, both in harvest and in war. *My flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth*, ver. 6. And they were never enquired after, were never encouraged to return to their own country; *none did search or seek after them*. Nay, *with force and cruelty they ruled them*, which drove more away and discouraged those that were driven away, from all thoughts of returning. Their case is bad who have reason to expect better treatment among strangers than in their own country. It may be meant of those of the flock that went astray from God and their duty, and the priests that should have taught the good knowledge of the Lord, used no means to convince and reclaim them, so that they became an easy prey to seducers. Thus were *they scattered, because there was no shepherd*, ver. 5. There were those that called themselves *shepherds*, but really *they were not*. Note, Those that do not do the work of shepherds are unworthy of the name. And if those that undertake to be shepherds are *foolish shepherds*, Zech. xi. 15. if they are proud and above their business, idle, and do not love their business, or faithless and unconcerned about it, the case of the flock is as bad as if it were without a shepherd. Better no shepherd, than such shepherds. Christ complains that his flock were *as sheep having no shepherd*, when yet the Scribes and Pharisees *sat in Moses seat*, Mat. ix. 36. It is ill with the patient when his physician is his worst disease; ill with the flock when the shepherds drive them away and disperse them, by *ruling them with force*.

7. ¶ Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 8. *As I live*, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became

meat to every beast of the field, because *there was no shepherd*, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock: 9. Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I *am* against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock, neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. 11. ¶ For thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I, *even I*, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. 12. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep *that are scattered*; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. 13. And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers; and in all the inhabited places of the country. 14. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be; there shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. 15. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down, saith the Lord GOD. 16. I will seek *that which was lost*, and bring again *that which was driven away*, and will bind up *that which was broken*, and will strengthen *that which was sick*: but I will destroy the fat and the strong, I will feed them with judgment.

Upon reading the foregoing articles of impeachment drawn up in God's name against the shepherds of Israel, we cannot but look upon the shepherds with a *just indignation*, and upon the flock with a *tender compassion*. God, by the prophet, here expresseth both in a high degree; and the shepherds are called upon, ver. 7. and again, ver. 9. to *hear the word of the Lord*, to hear this word. Let them *hear* how little he regards them who made much of themselves, and how much he regards the flock which they made nothing of; both will be humbling to them. Those that will not *hear the word of the Lord*, giving them their direction, shall be made to hear the word of the Lord reading them their doom. Now see here,

1. How much *displeased* God is at the shepherds. Their crimes are repeated, ver. 2. God's flock became a *prey* to the deceivers first, that drew them to idolatry, and then to the destroyers that carried them into captivity; and these shepherds took no care to prevent either the one or the other, but were as if there had been *no shepherds*; and therefore God saith it, ver. 10. and confirms it with an oath, ver. 8. *I am against the shepherds*. They had a commission from God to feed the flock, and made use of his name in what they did, expecting he would stand by them; no, saith God, so far from that, that *I am against them*. Note, It is not our having the name, and authority of shepherds that will engage God for us, if we do not the work enjoined us, and be not faithful to the trust reposed in us. God is *against them*, and they shall know it; for, (1.) They shall be called to an account how they have discharged their trust: *I will require my flock at their hands*, and charge it upon them, that so many of them are missing. Note, Those will have a great deal to answer for in the judgment day, who take upon them the care of souls, and yet take no care of them. Ministers must *watch* and work, as those that *must give account*, Heb. xiii. 17. (2.) They shall be deprived *ab officio & beneficio*, they shall be turned out both from the work, and from the wages of their place. *They shall cease from feeding the flock*, i. e. from pretending to feed it. Note, It is just with God to take out of mens hands that *power* which they have *abused*, and that *trust* which they have *betrayed*. But if this were all their punishment they could bear it well enough, therefore it is added, *neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more*, for *I will deliver my flock from their mouth*, which instead of protecting, they had made a prey of. Note, Those that are enriching themselves with the spoils of the publick, cannot expect that they shall always be suffered to do so. Nor will God always permit his people to be trampled upon by those that should support them; but will find a time to deliver them from the shepherds, their false friends, as well as from the lions, their open enemies.

2. How much *concerned* God is for the flock; he speaks as if he were the more concerned for them, because he saw them thus neglected, for *with him the fatherless finds mercy*. Precious promises are made here upon the occasion, which were to have their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity,

captivity, and their re-establishment in their own land. Let the shepherds *hear this word of the Lord*, and know that they have no part or lot in the matter. But let the poor sheep hear it and take the comfort of it. Note, Tho' magistrates and ministers fail in doing their part for the good of the church, yet God will not fail in doing his; he will take the flock into his own hand, rather than the church shall come short of any kindness he has designed for it. The under-shepherds may prove careless, but the Chief Shepherd *neither slumbers nor sleeps*. They may be false, but God *abides faithful*.

1. God will *gather his sheep together that were scattered*, and bring them back to the fold, that had *wandered* from it. *I, even I*, who alone can do it, will do it, and will have all the glory of it. *I will both search my sheep, and find them out*, ver. 11. as a *shepherd* doth, ver. 12. and bring them back as he doth the stray sheep, upon his shoulders, *from all the places where they have been scattered, in the cloudy and dark day*. There are cloudy and dark days, windy and stormy ones, which scatter God's sheep; which send them hither and thither, to divers and distant places, in quest of secrecy and safety. But, (1.) Wherever they are, the eye of God will *find them out*; for his eyes run to and fro through the earth in favour of them. *I will seek out my sheep*, and not one that belongs to the fold, tho' driven never so far off, shall be lost. The Lord knows them that are his, he *knows their work*, and *where they dwell*, Rev. ii. 13. and where they are hidden. (2.) When his time is come, his arms will *fetch them home*, ver. 13. *I will bring them out from the people*. God will both incline their hearts to come by his grace, and will by his providence open a door for them, and remove every difficulty that lies in the way. They shall not return one by one, clandestinely stealing away, but they shall return in a body; *I will gather them from the countries*, into which they are dispersed; not only the most considerable families of them, but every particular person, ver. 16. *I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away*. This was done when so many thousand Jews returned triumphantly out of Babylon, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and others. When those that have gone astray from God into the paths of sin, are brought back by repentance; when those that erred come to the acknowledgment of the truth; when God's *outcasts* are gathered and restored, and religious assemblies that were dispersed, rally again upon the ceasing of persecution, and when the churches have rest and liberty, then this promise has a further accomplishment.

2. God will *feed his people as the sheep of his pasture*, that had been furnished. God will bring the returning captives safe to their own land, ver. 13. *will feed them upon the mountains of Israel*, and that is a *good pasture*; and a *fat pasture*, ver. 14. there shall their *feeding* be; and there shall be *their fold*; and it is a *good fold*. There God will not only *feed them*, but *cause them to lie down*, ver. 15. which notes a *comfortable rest*, after they had tired themselves with their wandrings; and a *constant continuing residence*; they shall not be driven out again, from these green pastures, as they have been, nor shall they be disturbed, but shall lie down in a sweet repose, and there shall be *none to make them afraid*. Psal. xxiii. 2. *He maketh me to lie down in great pastures*. Compare this with the like promise, Jer. xxiii. 3, 4. when God restored them not only to the milk and honey of their own land, to the enjoyment of the fruits of it, but to the privileges of his sanctuary on mount Zion, the chief of the mountains of Israel; when they had an altar and a temple again, and the benefit of a settled priesthood, then they were *fed in a good pasture*.

3. He will succour those that are hurt, will *bind up that which was broken*, and *strengthen that which was sick*, will comfort those that *mourn in Zion*, and with Zion. If ministers, that should speak peace to those that are of a sorrowful spirit, neglect their duty, yet the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, will be faithful to his office. But as it follows, the *fat and the strong shall be destroyed*. He that hath rest for disquieted saints hath terror to speak to presumptuous sinners. As *every valley shall be filled*, so *every mountain and hill shall be brought low*, Luke iii. 5.

17. And *as for you, O my flock*, thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. 18. *Seemeth it a small thing unto you*, to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? 19. And *as for my flock*, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet: and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet. 20. ¶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD unto them, Behold, I, *even I* will judge between the fat cattle, and between the lean cattle. 21. Because ye have thrust with side, and with shoulder, and pushed all

the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad: 22. Therefore will I save my flock, and they shall no more be a prey, and I will judge between cattle and cattle. 23. And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, *even my servant David*; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. 24. And I the LORD will be their God; and my servant David a prince among them, I the LORD have spoken it. 25. And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods. 26. And I will make them and the places round about my hill, a blessing; and I will cause the shower to come down in his season: there shall be showers of blessing. 27. And the tree of the field shall yield her fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase, and they shall be safe in their land, and shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. 28. And they shall no more be a prey to the heathen, neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and none shall make them afraid. 29. And I will raise up for them a plant of renown, and they shall be no more consumed with hunger in the land, neither bear the shame of the heathen any more. 30. Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God *am* with them, and that they, *even* the house of Israel *are* my people, saith the Lord GOD. 31. And ye my flock the flock of my pasture, *are* men, and I *am* your God, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet has no more to say to the shepherds, but he has now a message to deliver to the *flock*; God had ordered him to speak tenderly to them, and to assure them of the mercy he had in store for them. But here he is ordered to make a difference between some and others of them, to separate between the precious and the vile, and then to give them a promise of the Messiah, by whom this distinction should be effectually made, partly at his first coming, for, *for judgment he came into this world*, John ix. 39. to *fill the hungry with good things*, and to *send the rich empty away*, Luke i. 53. But completely at his second coming, when he shall, as it is here said, *judge between cattle and cattle, as a shepherd divides between the sheep and the goats, and shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats on his left*, Mat. xxv. 32, 33. which seems to have reference to this here. We have here,

1. Conviction spoken to those of the flock that were *fat and strong, the rams, and the he-goats*, ver. 17. Those that, though they had not power as *shepherds* and rulers to oppress with, yet being rich and wealthy, made use of the opportunity which this gave them to bear hard upon their poor neighbours. Those that have *much* would have *more*, and if they set to it *will* have more, so many ways have they of encroaching upon their poor neighbours, and forcing from them *the one ewe lamb*, 2 Sam. xii. 14. Do not the rich *oppress* the poor meerly with the help of their riches, and *draw them before the judgment seats*? Jam. ii. 6. Poor servants and tenants are hardly used by their rich lords and masters. The *rams* and the *he-goats* not only kept all the good pasture to themselves, eat the fat and drunk the sweet, but they would not let the poor of the flock have any comfortable enjoyment of the little that was left them; they *trod down the residue of the pastures*, and *fouled the residue of the waters*, so that the flock was fain to eat that which they had *trodden* into the dirt, and drink that which they had *muddied*, ver. 18, 19. This intimates, that the great men, not only by extortion and oppression, made and kept their neighbours poor, and scarce left them enough to subsist on, but were so vexatious to them, that what little coarse fare they had was embittered to them. And this *seemed a small thing* to them; they thought there was no harm in it, as if it were the privilege of their quality to be injurious to all their neighbours. Note, Many that live in pomp, and at ease themselves, care not what straits those about them are reduced to, so they may but have every thing to their mind. Those that *are at ease*, and the *proud*, grudge that any body should live by them with any comfort.

But this was not all; they not only robbed the poor, to make them poorer, but were troublesome to the sick and weak of the flock, ver. 21. they *thrust with side and shoulder* those that were feeble, for the weakest goes to the wall, and *pushed the diseased with their horns*, because they knew they could be too hard for them, when they durst not meddle with their match. It has been observed concerning sheep, that if one of the flock be sick and fainty the rest will secure it as they can, and shelter it from the scorching heat of the sun, but these on the contrary were most injurious to

to the diseased. Those that they could not serve themselves of, they did what they could to rid the country of them, and so scattered them abroad, as if the poor, whom Christ saith we must have always with us, were publick nuisances, not to be relieved but sent far enough. Note, It is a barbarous thing to add affliction to the afflicted. Perhaps these rams and he-goats are designed to represent the Scribes and Pharisees, for they are such troublers of the church as Christ himself must come to deliver it from, ver. 23. they devoured widows houses, took away the key of knowledge, corrupted the pure water of divine truths, and oppressed the consciences of men with the traditions of the elders; besides, that they were continually vexatious and injurious to the poor of the flock that waited on the Lord, Zech. xi. 11. Note, It is no new thing for the flock of God to receive a great deal of damage and mischief from those that are themselves of the flock, and in eminent station in it, Acts xx. 30.

2. Comfort spoken to those of the flock that are poor and feeble, and wait for the consolation of Israel, ver. 22. I will save my flock, and they shall no more be spoiled as they have been by the beasts of prey, by their own shepherds; or by the rams and he-goats among themselves. Upon this occasion, as is usual in the prophets, comes in a prediction of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his kingdom; and the exceeding great and precious benefits which the church should enjoy under the protection and influence of that kingdom. Observe,

1. What is here foretold concerning the Messiah himself.

(1.) He shall have his commission from God himself, I will set him up, ver. 23. I will raise him up, ver. 29. he sanctified and sealed him, appointed and anointed him. (2.) He shall be the great shepherd of the sheep, who shall do that for his flock which no one else could do. He is the one shepherd under whom Jews and Gentiles should be one fold. (3.) He is God's servant, employed by him and for him, and doing all in obedience to his will, with an eye to his glory. His servant to re-establish his kingdom among men, and advance the interests of that kingdom. (4.) He is David; one after God's one heart, set as his king upon the holy hill of Zion, made the head of the corner; with whom the covenant of royalty is made, and to whom God would give the throne of his father David. He is both the root and offspring of David. (5.) He is the plant of renown, because a righteous branch, Jer. xxiii. 5. a branch of the Lord that is beautiful and glorious, Isa. iv. 2. He has a name above every name, a throne above every throne, and may therefore well be called a branch of renown. Some understand it of the church, the planting of the Lord, Isa. vi. 3. Its name shall be remembered, Psal. xlv. 17. and Christ's in it.

2. Concerning the great charter by which the kingdom of the Messiah should be incorporated, and upon which it should be founded, ver. 25. I will make with them a covenant of peace. The covenant of grace is a covenant of peace. In it God is at peace with us, speaks peace to us, and assures us of peace, of all good, all the good we need to make us happy. The tenor of this covenant is; I the Lord will be their God, a God all-sufficient to them, ver. 24. will own them, and will be owned by them; in order to this, my servant David shall be a prince among them, to reduce them to their allegiance, to receive their homage, and to reign over them, in them; and for them. Note, Those and those only that have the Lord Jesus for their prince, have the Lord Jehovah for their God. And then they, even the house of Israel, shall be my people. If we take God to be our God, he will take us to be his people. From this covenant between God and Israel there results communion. I the Lord their God am with them, to converse with them, and they shall know it, and have the comfort of it.

3. Concerning the privileges of those that are the faithful subjects of this kingdom of the Messiah, and interested in the covenant of peace. These are here set forth figuratively, as the blessings of the flock. But we have a key to it, ver. 31. They that belong to this flock, though they are spoken of as sheep, are really men; men that have the Lord for their God, and are in covenant with him. Now to them it is promised,

1. That they shall enjoy a holy-security, under the divine protection. Christ, our good shepherd, has caused the evil beasts to rise out of the land, ver. 25. having vanquished all our spiritual enemies, broke their power, and triumphed over them; the roaring lion is not a roaring, devouring lion to them; they shall not be a prey to the heathen, nor the heathen a terror to them; neither shall the beasts of the land devour them; sin and Satan, death and hell, are conquered. And then they shall dwell safely, not only in the folds, but in the fields, in the wilderness, in the woods, where the beasts of prey are; they shall not only dwell there, but they shall sleep there; which notes not only that the beasts being made to cease, there shall be no danger, but their consciences being purified and pacified, they shall be in no apprehension of danger; not only safe from evil, but quiet from the fear of evil. Those may lay them down and sleep securely, sleep at ease, that have Christ for their prince, for he will be their protector, and make them to dwell in safety. None shall hurt them, nay, none shall make them afraid. If God be for us; who can be against us? Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be moved. Through Christ God delivers his people, not only from

the things they have reason to fear, but from their fear even of death itself, from all that fear that has torment. This safety from evil is promised, ver. 27. they shall be safe in their land, in no danger of being invaded and enslaved, though their great plenty be a temptation to their neighbours to desire their land; and that which shall make them think themselves safe, is, their confidence in the wisdom, power, and goodness, of God; they shall know that I am the Lord; all our disquieting fears arise from our ignorance of God, and mistakes concerning him; and their experience of his particular care concerning them, which encourageth their confidence in him; I have broken the bands of their yoke, with which they have been brought and held down under oppression, and have delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them. From whence they shall argue, he that has delivered, doth and will, therefore will we dwell safely. This is explained, and applied to our gospel-state, Luke i. 74. That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, as those may do that serve him in faith.

2. That they shall enjoy a spiritual plenty of all good things, the best things, for their comfort and happiness. They shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, ver. 29. Famine and scarcity, when Israel was punished with that judgment, turned as much to their reproach among the heathen as any other, because the fruitfulness of Canaan was so much talked off. But now they shall not bear that shame of the heathen any more. For the showers shall come down in their season, even showers of blessings, ver. 26. Christ is a shepherd that will feed his people; and they shall go in and out and find pasture. (1.) They shall not be consumed with hunger; for they shall not be put off with the world for a portion, which is not bread, which satisfies not, and which those that are put off with cannot but be consumed with hunger. The ordinances of the ceremonial law are called beggarly elements, for there was little in them compared with the Christian institutes, wherewith the manna fills his hand, and he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. They that hunger and thirst after righteousness shall not be consumed with that hunger, for they shall be filled. And he that drinks of the water that Christ gives him, the still waters by which he leads his sheep, shall never thirst. (2.) Showers of blessings shall come upon them, ver. 26, 27. The heavens shall yield their dews, the trees of the field also shall yield her fruit. The seat of this plenty is God's hill, his holy hill of Zion, for on that mountain, in the gospel church, it is, that God has made to all nations a feast; to that those must join themselves that would partake of gospel benefits. The cause of this plenty is the showers that come down in their season, that descend upon the mountains of Zion, the graces of Christ, his doctrine that drops as the dew; the graces of Christ, and the gifts and comforts of his Spirit, by which we are made fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The instances of this plenty are the blessings of heaven poured down upon us, and the products of grace brought forth by us; our comfort in God's favour, and God's glory in our fruit-bearing. The extent of this plenty is very large, to all the places round about my hill; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, shall go forth light to a dark world; and the river that shall water a dry and desert world; all that are in the neighbourhood of Zion shall fare the better for it; and the nearer the church the nearer its God. And lastly, The effect of this plenty is, I will make them a blessing, eminently and exemplarily blessed, patterns of happiness, Isa. xix. 24. Or, They shall be blessings to all about them, diffusively useful. Note, Those that are the blessed of the Lord must study to make themselves blessings to the world. He that is good let him do good, that has received the gift, the grace, let him minister the same.

Now this promise of the Messiah and his kingdom spoke much comfort to those to whom it was then made, for they might be sure God would not utterly destroy their nation, how low soever it might be brought, as long as that blessing was in the womb of it, Isa. lxxv. 8. But it speaks much more comfort to us to whom it is fulfilled; who are the sheep of this good shepherd, are fed in his pastures, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things by him.

CHAP. XXXV.

It was promised in the foregoing chapter, that when the time is favour Zion, yea the set time should come, especially the time for sending the Messiah, and setting up his kingdom in the world, God would cause the enemies of the church to cease, and the blessings and comforts of the church to abound. This chapter enlargeth upon the former promise, concerning the destruction of the enemies of the church; the next chapter upon the latter promise, the replenishing of the church with blessings. Mount Seir, that is, Edom, is the enemy prophesied against in this chapter, but fitly put here, as in the prophecy of Obadiah, for all the enemies of the church; for as they all walked in the way of Cain that

that hated Abel, so they all walked in the way of Esau that hated Jacob, but over whom Jacob by virtue of a particular blessing was to have dominion. Now here we have, (1.) The sin charged upon the Edomites, and that was their spite and malice to Israel, ver. 5, 10, 11, 12, 13. (2.) The ruin threatened that should come upon them for this sin. God will be against them, ver. 3. and then their country shall be laid waste, ver. 4. depopulated, and made quite desolate, ver. 6, 7, 8, 9. and left so when other nations that had been wasted should recover themselves, ver. 14, 15.

1. **MOREOVER**, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against mount Seir, and prophesy against it, 3. And say unto it, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, O mount Seir, I am against thee, and I will stretch out mine hand against thee, and I will make thee most desolate. 4. I will lay thy cities waste, and thou shalt be desolate, and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 5. Because thou hast had a perpetual hatred, and hast shed the blood of the children of Israel by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity, in the time that their iniquity had an end: 6. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will prepare thee unto blood, and blood shall pursue thee: sith thou hast not hated blood, even blood shall pursue thee. 7. Thus will I make mount Seir most desolate, and cut off from it him that passeth out, and him that returneth. 8. And I will fill his mountains with his slain men: in thy hills, and in thy vallies, and in all thy rivers shall they fall that are slain with the sword. 9. I will make thee perpetual desolations, and thy cities shall not return, and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

Mount Seir was mentioned as partner with Moab in one of the threatnings we had before, chap. xxv. 8. But here it is convicted and condemned by itself, and has woes of its own. The prophet must boldly set his face against Edom, and prophesy particularly against it, for the God of Israel hath said, O mount Seir, I am against thee. Note, Those that have God against them, have the word of God against them, and the face of his ministers, neither dare they prophesy any good to them, but evil. The prophet must tell the Edomites, that God has a controversy with them, and let them know,

1. What is the cause and ground of that controversy, ver. 5. God espouseth his peoples cause, and will plead it; takes what is done against them, as done against himself, and will reckon for it, and it is upon their account that God now contends with the Edomites. (1.) Because of the enmity they had against the people of God, that was rooted in the heart; thou hast had a perpetual hatred to them, to the very name of an Israelite. The Edomites kept up an hereditary malice against Israel, the same that Esau bore to Jacob, because he got the birth-right and the blessing. Esau had been reconciled to Jacob, had embraced and kissed him, Gen. xxxiii. and we do not find that ever he quarrelled with him again. But the posterity of Esau would never be reconciled to the seed of Jacob, but hated them with a perpetual hatred. Note, Children will be more apt to imitate the vices than the virtues of their parents; and to tread in the steps of their sin, than in the steps of their repentance. Parents should therefore be careful not to set their children any bad example, for though through the grace of God they may return and prevent the mischief of what they have done amiss to themselves, they may not be able to obviate the ill influence of it upon their children. It is strange how deeply rooted national antipathies sometimes are, and how long they last; but not to be wondered at, that profane Edomites hate pious Israelites, since the old enmity that was put between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent, Gen. iii. 15. will continue to the end. Marvel not if the world hate you. (2.) Because of the injuries they had done to the people of God, they shed their blood by the force of the sword, in the time of their calamity, they did not attack them as fair and open enemies, but laid wait for them, to cut off those of them that had escaped, Obad. 14. Or, they drave them back upon the sword of the pursuers, by which they fell. It was cowardly as well as barbarous, to take advantage of their distress; and for neighbours with whom they had lived peaceably to smite them secretly, when strangers openly invaded them. It was in the time that their iniquity had an end, i. e. when the measure of it was full, and destruction came. Note, Even those that suffer justly, and for their sins, yet are to be pitied and not trampled upon. If the father corrects one child, he expects the rest should tremble at it, not triumph in it.

2. What should be the effect and issue of that controversy. If God stretch out his hand against the country of Edom, he will make it most desolate, ver. 3. Desolation and desolation. (1.)

The inhabitants shall be slain with the sword, ver. 6. I will prepare thee unto blood; Edom shall be gradually weakened, and so be the more easily conquered, and the enemy shall gather strength the more effectually to subdue it. Thus preparation is in the making a great while before for this destruction. Thou hast not hated blood, it implies thou hast delighted in it, and thirsted after it. Those that do not keep up a rooted hatred of sin, when a temptation to it is very strong, will be in danger of yielding to it. Some read it, Unless thou hatest blood, i. e. unless thou dost repent, and put off this bloody disposition, blood shall pursue thee. And then it is an intimation that the judgment may yet be prevented by a thorough reformation. If he turn not, he will whet his sword, Psal. vii. 12. But if he turn, he will lay it by. Blood shall pursue thee, i. e. the guilt of the blood which thou hast shed, or, the judgment of blood, thy blood-thirsty enemies shall pursue thee, which way soever thou seekest to make thy escape. A great and general slaughter shall be made of the Idumeans, such as had been foretold, Isa. xxxiv. 6. the mountains and hills, the vallies and rivers, shall be filled with the slain, ver. 8. The pursuers shall overtake those that flee, and shall give no quarter, but put them all to the sword. Note, When God comes to make inquisition for blood, those that have shed the blood of his Israel shall have blood given them to drink, for they are worthy. Satis te sanguine quem sisti. (2.) The country shall be laid waste. The cities shall be destroyed, ver. 4. the country made desolate, ver. 7. for God will cut off from both him that passeth out, and him that returneth; and when the inhabitants are cut off that should keep the cities in repair, they will decay, and go into ruins; and that should till the land, that will soon be over-run with briars and thorns, and become a wilderness. Note, Those who help forward the desolations of Israel may expect to be themselves made desolate. And that which compleats the judgment, is, that Edom shall be made perpetual desolations, ver. 9. and the cities shall never return to their former state, nor the inhabitants of them come back from their captivity and dispersion. Note, Those that have a perpetual enmity to God and his people, as the carnal mind has, can expect no other but to be made a perpetual desolation: Implacable malice will justly be punished with irreparable ruin.

10. Because thou hast said, These two nations, and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it, whereas the LORD was there: 11. Therefore, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, I will even do according to thine anger, and according to thine envy which thou hast used out of thy hatred against them: and I will make my self known amongst them, when I have judged thee. 12. And thou shalt know that I am the LORD, and that I have heard all thy blasphemies which thou hast spoken against the mountains of Israel, saying, They are laid desolate, they are given us to consume. 13. Thus with your mouth ye have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me: I have heard them. 14. Thus saith the Lord GOD, When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate. 15. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee: thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Here is (1.) A further account of the sin of the Edomites; and their ill carriage towards the people of God. We find the church complaining of them for setting on the Babylonians, and irritating them against Jerusalem, saying, Rase it, rase it, down with it, down with it, Psal. cxxxvii. 7. inflaming a rage that needed no spur; here it is further charged upon them, that they triumphed in Jerusalem's ruin, and in the desolations of the country. Many blasphemies they spoke against the mountains of Israel, saying with pride and pleasure, they are laid desolate, ver. 12. Note, The troubles of God's church as they give proofs of the constancy and fidelity of its friends, so they discover and draw out the corruptions of its enemies, in whom there then appears more brutish malice than one would have thought of.

Now their triumphing in Jerusalem's ruin is here said to proceed, (1.) From a sinful passion against the people of Israel; from anger and envy, and hatred against them, ver. 11. that perpetual hatred spoken of, ver. 5. Tho' they were not a match for them, and therefore could not do them a mischief themselves, yet they were glad when the Chaldeans did them a mischief. (2.) From a sinful appetite to the land of Israel, they pleased themselves with hopes, that when the people of Israel were destroyed they should be let into the possession of their country, which they had so often grudged and envied them. They thought they could make out something of a title to it, ob defectum sanguinis. If Jacob's issue fail they think they are next in the entail, and that the remainder will be to his brother's issue; These two nations of Judah and Israel shall be mine. Now is the time for me to put

in for them; however they hope to come in as first occupants, being near neighbours, *we will possess it*, when it is deserted, *Greditur occupanti*, let us get possession, and that will be title enough. Note, Those have the spirit of Edomites who desire the deaths of others, because they hope to get by them, or are pleased with others *failing*, because they expect to come into their business. When we see the vanity of the world in the disappointments, losses, and crosses that others meet with in it, instead of shewing our selves upon such an occasion greedy of it, we should rather be made thereby to sit more loose to it, and both take our affections off it, and lower our expectations from it. But in this case of the Edomites coveting the land of Israel, and gaping for it, there was a particular affront to God, when they said, *these lands are given us to devour*, and we shall have our bellies full of their riches. God saith, *you have boasted against me, and have multiplied your words against me*, for they expected possession upon a vacancy, because Israel was driven out, *whereas the Lord was still there*, ver. 10. His temple indeed was burnt, and other the tokens of his presence gone, but his promise to give that land to the seed of Jacob, for an inheritance, was not made void, but remained in full force and virtue; and by that promise he did in effect still keep possession for Israel, till they should in due time be restored to it. That was Immanuel's land, *Isa. viii. 8.* in that land he was to be born, and therefore that people shall continue in it, of whom he is to be born, till he has passed his time in it, and then let who will take it; *The Lord is there*, i. e. The Lord Jesus is to be there; and therefore Israel's discontinuance of possession is no defeatance of their right, but it shall be kept for them, and they shall have, hold, and enjoy it, by virtue of the divine grant, till the promise of this Canaan shall by the Messiah be changed into the promise of a far better. Note, It is a piece of presumption highly offensive to God, for Edomites to lay claim to those privileges and comforts that are peculiar to God's chosen Israel, and are reserved for them. It is blasphemy *against the mountains of Israel*, the holy mountains, (as it is here called, ver. 12.) to say, because they are for the present made a prey of, and trodden under foot of the Gentiles, *Rev. xi. 2.* even the holy city it self, that therefore the Lord has forsaken them, *their God has forgotten them*. The apostle will by no means admit such a thought as this, that *God hath cast away his people*, *Rom. xi. 1.* No, tho' they are cast down for a time, they are not cast off for ever. Those reproach the Lord who say they are.

2. The notice God took of the barbarous insolence of the Edomites, and the doom passed upon them for it. *I have heard all thy blasphemies*, ver. 12. And again, ver. 13. *You have multiplied your words against me, and I have heard them*, I have observed them, I have kept an account of them. Note, In the multitude of words, none escapes God's cognizance; let men speak never so much, never so fast, tho' they multiply words, which they themselves regard not, but forget immediately, yet none of them are lost in the crowd, not the most idle words; but God hears them, and will be able to charge the sinner with them. All the haughty and hard speeches particularly which are spoken against the Israel of God, the words that are magnified, as it is in the margin, ver. 13. as well as the words that are multiplied, God takes notice of. For as the triflingest words are not below his cognizance, so the daringest are not above his rebuke. *I have heard all the blasphemies*. This is a good reason why we should bear reproach as if we heard it not, because *God will hear*, *Psal. xxxviii. 13, 15.* God has heard the Edomites blasphemy, let them therefore hear their doom, ver. 14, 15. It was a national sin; the blasphemies charged upon them were the sense and language of all the Edomites, and therefore shall be punished with a national desolation. And, (1.) It shall be a distinguishing punishment. As God has peculiar favours for Israelites, so he has peculiar plagues for Edomites; so that *when the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate*; when other nations have their desolations repaired to their joy, thine shall be perpetual, ver. 9. (2.) The punishment shall answer the sin. *As thou didst rejoice in the desolation of the house of Israel*, God will give thee enough of desolation, since thou art so fond of it, *thou shalt be desolate; I will make thee so*. Note, Those who instead of weeping with the mourners, make a jest of their grievances, may justly be made to weep like the mourners, and themselves to feel the weight, to feel the smart of those grievances they set so light by. Some read ver. 14. so as to compleat the resemblance between the sin and the punishment; *The whole earth shall rejoice when I make thee desolate, as thou didst rejoice when Israel was made desolate*. Those that are glad at the death and fall of others, may expect that others will be glad of their death, of their fall.

Lastly, In the destruction of the enemies of the church God designs his own glory, and we may be sure he will not come short of his design. (1.) That which he intends is to manifest himself, as a just and jealous God, firm to his covenant, and faithful to his people, and their injured cause. Ver. 11. *I will make my self known among them when I have judged thee*. The Lord is and will be known by the judgments which he executeth. (2.) His intention shall be fully answered, not only his own people shall be made to know it to their comfort, but even the Edomites themselves, and all other the enemies of his name and

people shall know that he is the Lord, ver. 4, 9, 15. As the works of creation and common providence demonstrate that there is a God, so the care taken of Israel shews, that Jehovah the God of Israel is that God alone, the true and living God.

C H A P. XXXVI.

We have done with mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn our selves with the prophet to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope before we have done with the chapter to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter; (1.) Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described, and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed, and that in due time they should be settled again in their own land in the midst of peace and plenty, ver. 1—15. (2.) Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate; wherein they are minded of their former sins, and God's judgments upon them to humble them for their sins, and under God's mighty hand, ver. 16—20. But it is promised, (1.) That God would glorify himself in shewing mercy to them, ver. 21—24. (2.) That he would sanctify them, by giving them his grace, and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake, and in answer to their prayers, ver. 25—38.

1. **A**L SO thou son of man, prophesy unto the mountains of Israel, and say, Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD. 2. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because the enemy had said against you, Aha, even the ancient high places are ours in possession: 3. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because they have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession unto the residue of the heathen, and ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people: 4. Therefore ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord GOD, Thus saith the Lord GOD to the mountains, and to the hills, to the rivers, and to the valleys, to the desolate wastes, and to the cities that are forsaken, which became a prey and derision to the residue of the heathen that are round about: 5. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Surely in the fire of my jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed my land into their possession, with the joy of all their heart, with despiteful minds to cast it out for a prey. 6. Prophecy therefore concerning the land of Israel, and say unto the mountains and to the hills, to the rivers and to the valleys, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I have spoken in my jealousy, and in my fury, because ye have born the shame of the heathen. 7. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, I have lifted up mine hand, Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame. 8. ¶ But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel, for they are at hand to come. 9. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown. 10. And I will multiply men upon you, all the house of Israel, even all of it, and the cities shall be inhabited, and the wastes shall be builded. 11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast, and they shall increase and bring fruit, and I will settle you after your old estates, and will do better unto you than at your beginnings, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 12. Yea, I will cause men to walk upon you, even my people Israel, and they shall possess thee, and thou shalt be their inheritance, and thou shalt no more henceforth bereave them of men. 13. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Because they say unto you, Thou land devourest up men, and hast bereaved thy nations; 14. Therefore thou shalt devour men no more, neither bereave thy nations any more, saith the Lord GOD. 15. Neither will I cause men to hear in thee the shame of the heathen any more, neither shalt thou bear the reproach of the

the reproach of the people any more, neither shalt thou cause thy nations to fall any more, saith the Lord GOD.

The prophet had been ordered to set his face *towards the mountains of Israel*, and *prophecy against them*, chap. vi. 2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now God is returning in mercy to them, he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, *ver. 1.* And again, *ver. 4.* *Ye mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord*; and what he saith to them, he saith to the hills, to the rivers, to the vallies, to the desolate wastes in the country, and to the cities that are forsaken, *ver. 4.* And again, *ver. 6.* The people were gone, some one way, and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains and vallies; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with them; *The earth abideth for ever.* Now to shew the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place; which if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon it to *hear the word of the Lord*, nor would as at this time have shewed it such things as these.

Here is, 1. The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It is become both a prey and a derision to the heathen that are round about, *ver. 4.* (1.) It is become a prey to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them, all their neighbours flew to the spoil, as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on; *ver. 3.* *They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that ye might be a possession to the heathen*; to the residue of them; even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation. No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite; *Turba Remi sequitur fortunam ut semper.* It is the common cry, when a man is down, down with him. (2.) It is become a derision to them. They took all they had, and laughed at them when they had done. *The enemy said, Alas, even the ancient high places are ours in possession*, *ver. 2.* Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, nor the sanctity, nor the fortifications of the land of Israel are its security: But we are become masters of it all. The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it; which is an instance of a base and sordid spirit; for the more glorious the prosperity was, the more piteous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel; *Ye are taken up in the lips of talkers, and are an infamy of the people*, *ver. 3.* All the talk of the country about, was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spoke of it had some peevish ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the *scorning of them that were at ease, and the contempt of the proud*, *Psal. cxxiii. 4.* There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach, when the crown was fallen from their head. Thus it was the lot of Christianity in its suffering-days to be every where spoken against.

2. The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly.

Let us see (1.) How they dealt with the Israel of God; they carved out larger possessions to themselves out of their land; out of God's land; for so indeed it was; *they have appointed my land into their possession*, *ver. 5.* and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative. It was the holy hand which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but *cast it out for a prey*, as if they had won it in a lawful war. And this they did without any dread of God, and his judgments, and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the joy of all their hearts, because they got by it, and with *despiteful minds* to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is *all the joy of a worldly heart*; and the calamities of God's people all the joy of a *despiteful mind*. And those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people, made a reproach of them; so that they were *the shame of the heathen*, *ver. 6.* Every body ridiculed them, and made a jest of them; and the truth is, they had by their own sin made themselves vile; so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous, and very barbarous.

(2.) How God would deal with them who were thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He hath *spoken against the heathen*, i. e. He hath passed sentence upon them, he hath determined to reckon with them for it, and this *in the fire of his jealousy*, both for his own honour, and for the honour of his people, *ver. 5.* Having a love for both, *strong as death*, he has a *jealousy* for both, *cruel as the grave*. They spoke in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them, and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully.

God will speak in his jealousy and in his fury, *ver. 6.* Fury is not in God, but he will exert his power against them, and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will *so speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure*. What he saith, he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath, He hath *lifted up his hand*, and sworn by himself, hath sworn heat, and yet with so much deliberation? It is this, *ver. 7.* *Surely the heathen that are about you they shall bear their shame.* Note, The righteous God to whom vengeance belongs will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people, sooner or later will have it *turned upon themselves*; perhaps in this world, either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach. However, in that day, when all the impenitent shall *rise to shame and everlasting contempt*.

3. The promises of God's favour to his Israel, and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies, to shew himself so much the more concerned for them, and ready to do them good; as David hoped that God would recompense him good for Shimei's cursing him. *Let them curse, but bless thou.* In this way, as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will, and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain, if the more unkind men are, the more kind God is; if the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, and the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say so to the mountains of Israel, which were now desolate and despised, that God is for them, and will turn to them, *ver. 9.* As the curse of God reacheth the ground for man's sake, so doth the blessing. Now that which is promised, is,

1. That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them. *My people Israel are at hand to come*, *ver. 8.* Tho' they are at a great distance from their own country, tho' they are dispersed in many countries, and tho' they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they shall come again to their own border, *Jer. xxxi. 17.* The time is at hand, for their return. Tho' there were above forty years of the seventy, (perhaps fifty) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it. A thousand years are with God but as one day. The mountains of Israel are now desolate, but God will cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants; not tenants, but freeholders; *they shall possess thee*, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs, *thou shalt be their inheritance*. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful, comfortable maintenance for their owners, at their return. When the land had enjoyed her sabbaths for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterwards, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath rest. *Ye shall be tilled and sown*, *ver. 9.* and shall yield your fruit to my people Israel, *ver. 8.* Note, It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.

3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement in their own land. *The cities shall be inhabited, the wastes shall be builded*, *ver. 10.* And *I will settle you after your old estates*, *ver. 11.* Their own sin had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall resettle them. When the prodigal son is become a penitent, he is settled again in his father's house according to his former estate; bring hither the first robe, and put it on him. *Nay, I will do better unto you now, than at your beginnings.* There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back, than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his peoples comforts in proportion to the time that he has afflicted them. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.

4. That the people after their return should be fruitful and multiply, and replenish this land, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thick inhabited, and as well peopled as ever. God will bring back to it *all the house of Israel, even all of it*; observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, *ver. 10.* *all whose spirits God stirred up to return*, and those only, were reckoned of the house of Israel, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, tho' but few in comparison returned at first; yet afterwards at divers times, they all returned; and then (saith God) *I will multiply these men*, *ver. 10.* *multiply man and beast, and they shall encrease*, *ver. 11.* Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church tho' for a time it may be diminished yet shall recover itself and be again replenished.

5. That

5. That the reproach long since cast upon the land of Israel, by the evil spies, and of late revived, that *it was a land that eat up the inhabitants* of it, by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan was got into an ill name: It had of old *spued out the inhabitants*, Lev. xviii. 28. the natives, the Aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have put another construction upon it, Num. xiii. 32. It had of late *devoured* the Israelites, and *spued* them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, it is a land, that instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabited it, *bereaves* them, *overthrows* them, and *causes them to fall*; it is a tenement that breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promiseth it shall be so no more; *thou shalt no more bereave them of men*, ver. 12. *shall devour men no more*, ver. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. Compare this with that promise, Zech. viii. 4. Note, God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they *bear no more the shame of the heathen*, ver. 15. especially when it is reformed, when sin which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they *bear no more the reproach of the people*. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will be soon redressed, and their honour retrieved.

16. ¶ Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 17. Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way, and by their doings: their way was before me as the uncleanness of a removed woman. 18. Wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land, and for their idols *wherewith* they had polluted it. 19. And I scattered them among the heathen, and they were dispersed thro' the countries: according to their way, and according to their doings I judged them. 20. And when they entred unto the heathen whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the LORD, and are gone forth out of his land. 21. ¶ But I had pity for mine holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went. 22. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, I do not *this* for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for mine holy names sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. 23. And I will sanctify my great name *which was* profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you, before their eyes. 24. For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land.

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return in due time to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes, that they were *unworthy*, utterly unworthy, of such a favour, therefore to remove that discouragement God here shews them, that he would do it for them purely *for his own name's sake*, that he might be glorified in them and by them; that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute, which of all others, is most *his glory*. And the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this here is intended further to shew, that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God; to this end Christ directed all he did in that short prayer, *Father, glorify thy name*, and God declared it was his end in all he did, in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven, *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, John xii. 28. Now observe here,

1. How God's name had suffered, both by the sins, and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

(1.) God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, ver. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. But they defiled it by their own way, their wicked way, that is our own way, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles

their land; renders it *abominable* to God, and *uncomfortable* to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him, or with one another. What was *unclean* might not be made use of; by the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us, we forfeit the use of them; and the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, *nothing is pure* to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary, and made every thing she touched ceremonially *unclean*, Lev. xv. 19. Sin is that *abominable thing* which the Lord hates, and which he cannot endure to look upon. They *shed blood*, and *worshipped idols*, ver. 18. and with those sins *defiled the land*. For this God poured out his fury upon them, scattered them among the heathen; their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands: Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nay, he did justice to his own honour, for he *judged them according to their way, and according to their doings*, ver. 19. And yet the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say, if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that *for mischief he brought them forth*. Their neighbours considered them rather as a *holy* people, than as a *sinful* people; and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him, and put contempt upon him; and God's name was continually every day blasphemed by their oppressors, Isa. lii. 5. (2.) When they entred into the land of the heathen, God had no glory by them there; but, on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, ver. 20. (1.) It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession, wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. The name of God, and his holy religion, was blasphemed through them, Rom. ii. 24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words, and the trusts reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous. (2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of Israel; for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers, and to make good his own grants. They said in scorn, *These are the people of the land*, these wicked people, you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts; these *miserable people*, you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours: These are the people that came out of *Jehovah's land*, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these they that had statutes so righteous, whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a *wise and understanding people*? And that is said to have *God so nigh unto them*? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, that appear here so vile, so abject? Thus God told his people, and did not increase his wealth by their price, Psal. xlv. 12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

2. Let us now see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them, and then working a great salvation for them. He would have scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. But tho' they were unworthy of his compassion, yet he had pity for his own holy name, and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused: He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which the house of Israel, even in the land of their captivity, had profaned, ver. 21. In pity to that, God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land. Therefore I will gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land, ver. 24. Not for your sake, because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, but for my holy names sake, ver. 22. that I may sanctify my great name, ver. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name; his holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself; nor doth any thing make a man truly great, but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it; I will sanctify my name which you have profaned. When God performs that which he hath sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy, the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes and yours. When God proves his holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe, (1.) God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself; he will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes, but for his own name's sake, because he will be glorified,

fied. (2.) God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; therefore he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin.

25. ¶ Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. 26. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. 27. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. 28. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses, and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. 30. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine among the heathen. 31. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations. 32. Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord GOD, be it known unto you: be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel. 33. Thus saith the Lord GOD, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded. 34. And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. 35. And they shall say, This land that was desolate, is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste, and desolate, and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited. 36. Then the heathen that are left round about you, shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it. 37. Thus saith the Lord GOD, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them, I will increase them with men like a flock. 38. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration, by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour, (which was answered in the foregoing verses with this, that God in doing it would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness) but their unfitness for such a favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy, and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect, which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry: But it is farther intended as a draught of the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As, chap. xxxiv. after a promise of their return, the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great shepherd; so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations; which we have as much need of for our sanctification, as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

1. God here promiseth that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, ver. 25, 26, 27. We had promises to the same purpose, chap. xi. 18, 19, 20. (1.) That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin; ver. 25. I will sprinkle clean water upon you; which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that, and to take away the sense of guilt, as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification, were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness; and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions; as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a holy Spirit that makes us holy. From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. And, ver. 29. I will save you from all your uncleannesses. Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God, and burthensome to themselves; when guilt is

pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promiseth his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, ver. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name, unless he sanctify our hearts; nor live to his glory, but by his grace. (2.) That God would give them a new heart; a disposition of mind excellent in itself, and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change in order to an universal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and that is necessary in order to their walking in newness of life. This is that divine nature which believers are by the promises made partakers of. (3.) That instead of a heart of stone, insensible, and inflexible, unapt to receive any divine impressions, and to return any devout affections, God would give a heart of flesh, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul, as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh. (4.) That since, besides our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will cause them to walk in his statutes, will not only shew them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom and will, and active powers for every good work. In order to this he will put his Spirit within them; as a teacher, guide, and sanctifier. Note, God doth not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but cause them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe, what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us, ye shall keep my judgments. If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours, according to the precept. Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

2. God here promiseth that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, ver. 28. ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. It is not, If you will be my people I will be your God, though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God, unless we be to him a people; but he hath chosen us and loved us first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works; ye shall be my people, I will make you so, I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God. And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, Rev. xxi. 3, 7.

3. He promiseth that he will bring about all that good for them, which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy, (1.) Then they shall return to their possessions, and be settled again in them; ver. 28. Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it them at first, Deut. vii. 7, 8. Therefore he is gracious, because he hath said, he will be so. This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them, ver. 33. In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance. This is God's method of mercy indeed, first to part men from their sins, and then restore them to their comforts. (2.) Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things; when they are saved from their uncleanness, from their sins which kept good things from them, then I will call for the corn, and will increase it, ver. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word the fruit both of the tree and of the field shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply, the products shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any other, a reproach to them, that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness. But now I will lay no famine upon you; and none are under that rod, but it is God that lays it on. Then they shall receive no more reproach of famine, shall never be again upbraided with that; nor shall it ever be said that God is a master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long lain desolate in the sight of all that passed by, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again be tilled, ver. 34. and having long lain fallow it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will call for the corn, and yet they must till the ground for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede but to quicken and encourage our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the hand of the diligent, that all who pass by shall take notice of it with wonder, ver. 35. They shall say, see

see what a blessed change here is, how *this land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden*; the desert turned again into a paradise. Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with, sufficient to balance the contempt they are now loaded with; and in them he will be *honoured*. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land, and of its products is compared, *ver. 38.* to the large *flocks* of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie waste shall be filled with *flocks of men*, not like the flocks with which the pastures are covered over, *Psal. lxx. 13.* but like the *holy flock* which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, Then the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed, when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for *living sacrifices*. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

4. He shews what shall be the *happy effects of this blessed change*. (1.) It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins, *ver. 31.* *Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and shall loath your selves.* See here what *sin* is; it is an *abomination*, a loathsome thing; that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the *first step* towards repentance; it is *remembering our own evil ways*, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed, and being particular in recapitulating them; we must remember against our selves, not only our gross enormities, *our own evil ways*, but our defects and infirmities, *our doings that were not good*, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is *self-loathing*, a holy shame and confusion of face, you shall *loath your selves in your own sight*, seeing how loathsome you have made your selves in the sight of God. Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; but our quarrelling with our selves is in order to our being upon good grounds reconciled to our selves. And lastly, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty, *then they shall loath themselves for their iniquities*. Note, The goodness of God should overcome our badness, and lead us to repentance. The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance, the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of our selves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed that will not be thus melted. (2.) It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God. *Ver. 36.* *Then the heathen that are left round about you, that spoke ignorantly of God, (for so all those do that speak ill of him) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better things, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities, and to replant the most desolate countries; and that though the course of his favours to his people may be obstructed for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever. They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation, by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel, and his works which he hath done for them, I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it. With us, saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.*

5. He proposeth these things to them, not as the recompence of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

1. Let them not think that they have *deserved* it. *Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you, ver. 32.* as before, *ver. 22.* *No, be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways.* God is doing this, all this which he hath promised; it is as sure to be done, as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then, (1.) They must *renounce the merit* of their own *good works*, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not *for their sakes*, that it is done; so when God brought Israel into Canaan the first time, an express *caveat* was entred against this thought, *Deut. ix. 4, 5, 6.* *it is not for thy righteousness.* It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities, or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in shewing mercy he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed, *Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes*; which intimates that we are apt to entertain a good conceit of our own merits, and are hardly persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them. But one way or other God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due. (2.) They must *repent of the sin*, of their own *evil ways*. They must own that the mercies they receive from God are not only not *merited*, but that they are a thousand times *forfeited*, and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works, that they must be *ashamed and confounded* for their *evil ways*, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

2. Yet let them know that they must *desire and expect* it, *ver. 37.* *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel.* God hath spoken and he will do it, and he will be *sought unto* for it; i. e. He requires that his people should *seek unto him*,

and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming towards them in ways of mercy. (1.) They must *pray* for it, for by prayer God is *sought unto*, and *enquired after*. What is the matter of God's *promises*, must be the matter of our *prayers*. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer, which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must *ask*, and then God will *give him the heathen for his inheritance*; must *pray the Father*, and then he will *send the Comforter*; much more must we *ask* that we may *receive*. (2.) They must *consult* the oracles of God, and thus also God is *sought unto*, and *enquired after*: the mercy must be not an act of providence only, but a *child of promise*; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God *enquired of* by Daniel, in the name of the *house of Israel*, then when he was about to do those great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he *understood by books*, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both *what* was to be expected, and *when*; and then he *set his face* to seek God by prayer, *Dan. ix. 2, 3.* Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us, and in both he must be *enquired of*.

C H A P. XXXVII.

The threatnings of the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem for their sins, which we had in the former part of this book, were not so terrible, but the promises of their restoration and deliverance for the glory of God, which we have here in the latter part of the book, are as comfortable; and as those were illustrated with many visions and similitudes, for the awakening of a holy fear; so are these for the encouraging of an humble faith. God had assured them, in the foregoing chapter, that he would gather the house of Israel, even all of it, and would bring them out of their captivity, and return them to their own land; but there were two things that rendered this very unlikely. (1.) That they were so dispersed among their enemies, so destitute of all helps and advantages which might favour or further their return, and so dispirited likewise in their own minds; upon all these accounts they are here in vision compared to a valley full of the dry bones of dead men; which should be brought together, and raised to life. The vision of this we have, *ver. 1—10.* And the explication of it, with its application to the present case, *ver. 11—14.* (2.) That they were so divided among themselves, too much of the old core between Judah and Ephraim remaining even in their captivity: but as to this, by a sign of two sticks made one in the hand of the prophet, is foreshewed the happy coalition that should be at their return between the two nations of Israel and Judah, *ver. 15—22.* In which there was a type of the uniting of Jews and Gentiles, Jews and Samaritans, in Christ and his church. And so the prophet slides into a prediction of the kingdom of Christ, which should be set up in the world with God's tabernacle in it, and of the glories and graces of that kingdom, *ver. 23—28.*

1. **T**HE hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, 2. And caused me to pass by them round about, and behold, there were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry. 3. And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? and I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. 4. Again he said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. 5. Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones, Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. 6. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you; and ye shall live, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So I prophesied as I was commanded: and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone. 8. And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above; but there was no breath in them. 9. Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Come from the four winds, O breath,

O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live. 10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. 11. ¶ Then he said unto me, Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost, we are cut off for our parts. 12. Therefore prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. 13. And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14. And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD.

Here is, 1. The *vision* of a resurrection from death to life, and it is a glorious resurrection. This is a thing so utterly unknown to nature, and so contrary to its principles, *A privatione ad habitum non datur regressus*, that we could have no thought of it, but by the word of the Lord; and that it is certain by that word, that there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, some have urged from this vision; for (say they) otherwise it would not properly be made a sign for the confirming of their faith in the promise of their deliverance out of Babylon, as the coming of the Messiah is mentioned for the confirming of their faith touching a former deliverance, *Isa. vii. 14.* But whether it be a confirmation or no, it is without doubt a most lively representation of a threefold resurrection, besides that which it is primarily intended to be the sign of. (1.) The resurrection of souls from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life, by the power of divine grace going along with the word of Christ, *John v. 24, 25.* (2.) The resurrection of the gospel church, or any part of it, from an afflicted persecuted state, especially under the yoke of the New Testament Babylon, to liberty and peace. (3.) The resurrection of the body at the great day, especially the bodies of believers that shall rise to life eternal. Let us observe the particulars of this vision.

1. The deplorable condition of these dead bones; the prophet was made, (1.) To take an exact view of them. By a prophetic impulse and a divine power, he was in vision carried out and set in the midst of a valley, probably, that plain spoken of *chap. iii. 22.* where God then talked with him; and it was full of bones, of dead mens bones; not piled up on a heap, as in a charnel-house, but scattered upon the face of the ground, as if some bloody battle had been fought here, and the slain left unburied, till all the flesh was devoured or putrefied; and nothing left but the bones, and those disjointed from one another, and dispersed. He passed by them round about, and he observed not only that they were very many, for there are multitudes gone to the congregation of the dead; but that, lo, they were very dry, having been long exposed to the sun and wind. The bones that had been moistened with marrow, (*Job xxi. 24.*) when they have been any while dead, lose all their moisture, and are dry as dust; the body is now fenced with bones, *Job x. 11.* but then they will themselves be defenceless. The Jews in Babylon were like those dead and dry bones, unlikely ever to come together, to be so much as a skeleton, less likely to be formed into a body, and least of all to be a living body. However, they lay unburied in the open valley, which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection, as of the two witnesses, *Rev. xi. 8, 9.* The bones of Gog and Magog shall be buried, *chap. xxxiv. 12, 15.* for their destruction is final, but the bones of Israel are in the open valley, under the eye of heaven, for there is hope in their end. (2.) He was made to own their case deplorable, and not to be helped by any power less than that of God himself, *ver. 3.* Son of man, can these bones live? Is it a thing likely? Canst thou devise how it should be done? Can thy philosophy reach to put life into dry bones, or thy politicks to restore a captive nation? No, saith the prophet, I know not how it should be done, but thou knowest. He doth not say, they cannot live, lest he should seem to limit the holy One of Israel; but, Lord, thou knowest whether they can, and whether they shall; and if thou dost not put life into them, for certain they cannot live. Note, God is perfectly acquainted with his own power, and his own purposes, and will have us to refer all to them; and to see and own that his wondrous works are such as could not be effected by any counsel or power but his own.

3. The means used for the bringing of these dispersed bones together, and these dead and dry bones to life. It must be done by prophecy. Ezekiel is ordered to prophesy upon these bones, *ver. 4.* and again, *ver. 9.* Prophesy to the wind. So he prophesied, as he was commanded, *ver. 7.* and again, *ver. 10.* (1.) He must

went along with the word of God, which he preached. (2.) He must pray, and he did so; and the dead bones were made to live in answer to prayer; for a spirit of life entered into them. See the efficacy of the word and prayer, and the necessity of both, for the raising of dead souls. God bids his ministers, prophesy upon the dry bones; say unto them, live; yea, say unto them, live; and they do as they are commanded, calling to them again and again; O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord; but we call in vain, still they are dead, still they are very dry; we must therefore be earnest with God in prayer for the working of the Spirit with the word; Come, O breath, and breathe upon them. God's grace can save souls without our preaching, but our preaching cannot save them without God's grace, and that grace must be sought by prayer. Note, Ministers must faithfully and diligently use the means of grace, even with those that there seems little probability of gaining upon. To prophesy upon dry bones, seems as great a penance as to water a dry stick; and yet whether they will hear or forbear, we must discharge our trust, must prophesy as we are commanded, in the name of him who raiseth the dead, and is the fountain of life.

3. The wonderful effect of these means. Those that do as they are commanded, as they are commissioned in the face of the greatest discouragements, need not doubt of success, for God will own and enrich his own appointments.

1. Ezekiel looked down, and prophesied upon the bones in the valley, and they became human bodies. (1.) That which he had to say to them, was, that God would infallibly raise them to life. Thus saith the Lord God unto those bones, Ye shall live, *ver. 5.* and again, Ye shall live, *ver. 6.* And he that speaks the word, will thereby do the work; he that saith they shall live, will make them alive. He will clothe them with skin and flesh, *ver. 6.* as he did at first, *Job x. 11.* He that made us so fearfully and wonderfully, and curiously wrought us, can in like manner now make us, for his arm is not shortened. (2.) That which was presently done for them, was, that they were molded anew into shape. We may well suppose it was with great liveliness and vigour that the prophet prophesied, especially when he found what he said begin to take effect. Note, The opening, sealing, and applying of the promises, is the ordinary means of our participation of a new and divine nature. As Ezekiel prophesied in this vision, there was a noise, a word of command from heaven seconding what he said; or, it signified the motion of the angels that were to be employed as the ministers of the divine providence in the deliverance of the Jews, and we read of the noise of their wings, *Ezek. i. 24.* and the sound of their going, *2 Sam. v. 24.* And behold a shaking or commotion among the bones; even dead and dry bones begin to move, when they are called to hear the word of the Lord. This was fulfilled when upon Cyrus's proclamation of liberty, those whose spirits God had stirred up, began to think of making use of that liberty, and getting ready to be gone, when there was a noise, behold a shaking; when David heard the sound of the going on the tops of the mulberry-trees, then he bestirred himself; then there was a shaking. When Paul heard the voice saying, Why persecutest thou me? Behold, a shaking of the dry bones, he trembled, and was astonished. But this was not all, The bones came together bone to his bone, under a divine direction; and tho' there are in man a multitude of bones, yet of all the bones of all those numerous slain, not one was missing, not one missed its way, not one missed its place, but, as it were by instinct, each knew and found its fellow; the dispersed bones came together, and the displaced bones were knit together; the divine power supplying that to these dry bones, which in a living body every joint supplies. Thus shall it be in the resurrection of the dead, the scattered atoms shall be ranged and marshalled in their proper place and order, and every bone come to his bone, by the same wisdom and power by which the bones were first formed in the womb of her that is with child. Thus it was in the return of the Jews; they that were scattered in several parts of the province of Babylon come to their respective families, and all as it were by consent, to the general rendezvous, in order to their return. By degrees sinews and flesh came upon these bones, and the skin covered them, *ver. 8.* This was fulfilled when the captives got their effects about them, and the men of their place helped them with silver and gold, and whatever they needed for their remove, *Ezra i. 4.* But still there was no breath in them; they wanted spirit and courage for such a difficult and hazardous enterprize as this was of returning to their own land.

2. Ezekiel then looked up, and prophesied to the wind, or breath, or spirit, and said, Come, O breath, and breathe upon these slain; as good have been still dry bones, as dead bodies: but as for God, his work is perfect; he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; therefore breathe upon them that they may live. In answer to this request, the breath presently came into them, *ver. 10.* Note, The spirit of life is from God; he at first in the creation breathed into man the breath of life, and so he will at last in the resurrection. The dispirited despairing captives were wonderfully animated with resolution to break through all the discouragements that lay in the way of their return, and applied themselves to it with all imaginable vigour. And then they stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army: not only living men, but

but effective men, fit for service in the wars; and formidable to all that gave them any opposition. Note, With God nothing is impossible. He can *out of stones raise up children unto Abraham*, and out of dead and dry bones, levy an exceeding great army, to fight his battles, and plead his cause.

2. The application of this vision to the present calamitous condition of the Jews in captivity. *These bones are the whole house of Israel*, both the ten tribes and the two. See in this what they are, and what they shall be.

1. The depth of despair, to which they are now reduced, *ver. 11.* They all give up themselves for lost and gone; they say, *Our bones are dried, our strength exhausted, our spirits gone, our hope is all lost, every thing we looked for succour and relief from fails us, and we are cut off for our parts.* Let who will cherish some hope, we see no ground for any. Note, When troubles continue long, hopes have been often frustrated, and all creature-confidence fail, it is not strange if the spirits sink; and nothing but an active faith in the power, promise, and providence of God, will keep them from dying away quite.

2. The height of prosperity, to which, notwithstanding this, they shall be advanced. Therefore, because things are come thus to the last extremity, *prophecy to them* and tell them, now is God's time to appear for them, Jehovah-Jireh, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, *ver. 12, 13, 14.* Tell them (1.) That they shall be brought out of the land of their enemies, where they are as it were buried alive; *I will open your graves.* Those shall be restored, not only whose bones are scattered at the graves mouth, *Psal. cxli. 7.* but who are buried in the grave; tho' the power of the enemy is like the bars of the pit, which one would think it impossible to break through, strong as death, and cruel as the grave, yet it shall be conquered; God can bring his people up from the depths of the earth, *Psal. lxxi. 20.* (2.) That they shall be brought into their own land, where they shall live in prosperity. *I will bring you into the land of Israel, ver. 12.* and place you there, *ver. 14.* and will put my Spirit in you, and then ye shall live. Note, Then God puts spirit in us to good purpose, and so that we shall indeed live, when he puts his Spirit in us. And (lastly) in all this God will be glorified, *ye shall know that I am the Lord, ver. 13.* that I have spoken it and performed it, *ver. 14.* Note, God's quickning the dead redounds more than any thing to his honour, and to the honour of his word, which he has magnified above all his name; and will magnify more and more by the punctual accomplishment of every tittle of it.

15. ¶ The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 16. Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, for Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions. 17. And join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in thine hand. 18. ¶ And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? 19. Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. 20. ¶ And the sticks whereon thou writest, shall be in thine hand before their eyes. 21. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. 22. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: 23. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. 24. And David my servant shall be king over them: and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. 25. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their childrens children for ever, and my servant David shall be their prince for

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ever. 26. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. 27. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28. And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

Here are more exceeding great and precious promises made of the happy state of the Jews after their return to their own land, but they have a further reference to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the glories of gospel times.

1. It is here promised, that Ephraim and Judah shall be happily united in brotherly love, and mutual serviceableness; so that, whereas ever since the desertion of the ten tribes from the house of David under Jeroboam, there had been continual feuds and animosities between the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and it is to be feared there had been some clashings between them even in the land of their captivity; Ephraim upon all occasions envying Judah, and Judah vexing Ephraim; that now it should be no longer, but there shall be a coalition between them, and notwithstanding the old differences that had been between them they should agree to love one another, and to do one another all good offices. This is here illustrated by a sign; the prophet was to take two sticks, and write upon one, for Judah including Benjamin, those of the children of Israel, that were his companions; upon the other, for Joseph, including the rest of the tribes, *ver. 16.* These two sticks must be so framed as to fall into one in his hand, *ver. 17.* The people took notice of this, and desired him to tell them the meaning of it, for they knew he did not play with sticks for his diversion as children do. Those that would know the meaning should ask the meaning of the word of God which they read and hear, and of the instituted signs by which spiritual and divine things are represented to us; the ministers lips should keep the knowledge hereof, and the people should ask it at their mouth, *Mal. ii. 7.* It is a necessary question for grown people as well as children to ask, *what mean ye by this service*, by this sign? *Exod. xii. 26.* The meaning was, that Judah and Israel should become one in the hand of God, *ver. 19.* (1.) They shall be one; one nation, *ver. 22.* They shall have no separate interests, and consequently no divided affections. There shall be no mutual jealousies and animosities, no remembrance no remains of their former discord. But there shall be a perfect harmony between them; a good understanding one of another, a good disposition one to another, and a readiness to all good offices and services for one another's credit and comfort. They had been two sticks crossing and thwarting one another, nay, beating and bruising one another, but now they shall become one, supporting and strengthening one another, *Vis unita fortior.* Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is to see Judah and Israel that had long been at variance, now dwelling together in unity; then they shall become acceptable to their God, amicable to their friends, and formidable to their enemies, *Isa. xi. 13, 14.* (2.) They shall be one in God's hand; by his power they shall be united, and being by his hand brought together, his hand shall keep them together, so that they shall not fly off to be separated again. They shall be one in his hand, for his glory shall be the center of their unity, and his grace the cement of it. In him, in a regard to him, and in his service and worship, they shall unite, and so shall become one. Both sides shall agree to put themselves into his hand, and so they shall be one; *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt.* Note, Those are best united that are one in God's hand; whose union with each other results from their union with Christ, and their communion with God through him, *Eph. i. 10.* One in us, *John xvii. 21.* (3.) They shall be one in their return out of captivity, *ver. 21.* I will take them from among the heathen, and gather them on every side, and bring them together incorporated into one body to their own land. They shall be one in their separation from the heathen with whom they had mingled themselves: they shall both agree to part from them, and take their affections off from them, and no longer to comply with their usages, and then they will soon agree to join together in walking according to the rule of God's word. Their having been joint-sufferers will contribute to this blessed comprehension, when they begin to come to themselves and to consider things. Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted they will run all together. It was time for them to strengthen one another, when their oppressors were so busy to weaken and ruin them all. Likewise, their being joint sharers in the favour of God, and the great and common deliverance wrought out for them all should help to unite them. God's loving them all was a good reason why they should love one another. Times of common joy, as well as times of common suffering should be healing loving times. (4.) They shall all be the subjects of one king, and so they shall become one. The Jews after their return were under one government, and not divided as formerly. But this certainly looks further to the kingdom of Christ; he is that one king, in allegiance to whom

all God's spiritual Israel shall cheerfully unite, and under whose protection they shall all be gathered. All believers unite in *one Lord, one faith, and one baptism*. And the uniting of Jews and Gentiles in the gospel church, their becoming one fold under Christ the one great shepherd, is doubtless the union that is chiefly looked at in this prophecy. By Christ the partition wall between them was taken down, and the enmity slain, and of them *twain* was made *one new man*, Eph. ii. 14, 15.

2. It is here promised that the Jews shall by their captivity be cured of their inclination to idolatry; this shall be the happy fruit of that affliction, even the taking away of their sin, *ver. 23*. *Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols*, those detestable defiling things, no, nor with any of their former transgressions. Note, When one sin is sincerely parted with, all sin is abandoned too, for he that hates sin as sin will hate all sin. And those that are cured of their *spiritual idolatry*, their inordinate affection to the world and the flesh, that no longer make a god of their money or their belly, have a happy blow given to the root of all their transgressions. Two ways God will take to cure them of their idolatry; (1.) By bringing them out of the way of temptation to it; *I will save them out of all their dwelling places wherein they have sinned*, because there they met with the occasion of sin, and allurements to it. Note, It is our wisdom to avoid the places where we have been overcome by temptations to sin, not to remain in them, or return to them, but to *save our selves* out of them, as we would out of infected places; see *Zech. ii. 7*. *Rev. xviii. 6*. And it is a great mercy, when God in his providence *saves us out of the dwelling places where we have sinned*, and keeps us from harm, by keeping us out of harm's way; in answer to our prayer, *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*. (2.) By changing the disposition of their mind; *I will cleanse them*, i. e. *ver. 28*. I will sanctify them, will work in them an aversion to the pollutions of sin, and a complacency in the pleasures of holiness; and then you may be sure they will not defile themselves any more with their idols; whom God hath cleansed he will keep clean.

3. It is here promised that they shall be the *people of God*, as *their God*, and the *subjects* and *sheep* of Christ their *king* and *shepherd*. These promises we had before, and they are here repeated, *ver. 23, 24*. for the encouragement of the faith of Israel. *They shall be my people to serve me, and I will be their God to serve them, and to make them happy*. *David my servant shall be king over them*, to fight their battles, to protect them from injury, and to rule them, and over-rule all things that concern them for their good. He shall be their shepherd, to guide them and provide for them; Christ is David, Israel's king of old; and those whom he subdues to himself, and makes willing in the day of his power, he makes them to *walk in his judgments, and to keep his statutes*.

4. It is here promised that *they shall dwell comfortably*, *ver. 25, 26*. They shall dwell in the land of Israel, for where else should Israelites dwell? And many things will concur to make their dwelling agreeable. (1.) They shall have it by *covenant*; they shall come in again upon their old title, by virtue of the grant made unto *Jacob God's servant*. As Christ was *David God's servant*, so the church is *Jacob his servant* too; and the members of the church shall come in for a share, as *born in God's house*. He will make a *covenant of peace* with them, *ver. 26*. and in pursuance of that covenant he will *place them and multiply them*. Note, Temporal mercies are then doubly sweet when they come from the promise of the covenant, and not merely from common providence. (2.) They shall come to it by prescription, it is *the land wherein your fathers have dwelt*, and for that reason you cannot but have a special kindness for it, which God will graciously gratify. It was the inheritance of their ancestors, and therefore shall be theirs; they are *beloved for their fathers sakes*. (3.) They shall have it *entailed* upon them and the *heirs of their body*, and shall have their families built up, so that it shall not be lost for want of heirs. *They shall dwell therein all their time*, and never be turned out of possession, and they shall leave it for an inheritance to their children, and their childrens children for ever, who shall enjoy it when they are gone, the prospect of which will be a satisfaction to them. (4.) They shall live under a good government, which will contribute very much to the comfort of their lives; *my servant David shall be their prince for ever*. This can be no other than Christ, of whom it was said when he was brought into the world, *He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 33. Note, It is the unspeakable comfort of all Christ's faithful subjects, that as his *kingdom is everlasting* so he is an *everlasting king*, he lives to reign for ever; and as sure, and as long as he lives and reigns they shall live and reign also. (5.) The charter by which they hold all their privileges is *indefeasible*. God's covenant with them shall be an *everlasting covenant*; so the covenant of grace is, for it secures to us an everlasting happiness.

5. It is here promised that God will *dwell among them*, and this will make them dwell comfortably indeed. *I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore: my tabernacle also shall be with them*, *ver. 26, 27*. (1.) They shall have the tokens of God's special presence with them, and his gra-

cious residence among them. God will in very deed *dwell with them upon the earth* for where his sanctuary is he is; when they profaned his sanctuary he took it from them, *Isa. lxiv. 11*. but now they are purified God will dwell with them again. (2.) They shall have opportunity of conversing with God, of hearing from him, speaking to him, and so keeping up communion with him, which will be the comfort of their lives. (3.) They shall have the means of grace. By the oracles of God in his tabernacle they shall be made wiser and better, and all their children shall be taught of the Lord. (4.) Thus their covenant relation to God shall be improved, and the bond of it strengthened, *I will be their God, and they shall be my people*, and they shall know it by having my *sanctuary among them*, and shall have the comfort of it.

6. Both God and Israel shall have the honour of this among the heathen, *ver. 26*. Now the heathen observe how Israel had profaned their own crown by their sins; and God has profaned it by his judgments; but then when Israel is reformed, and God is returned in mercy to them, the very heathen shall be made to know, that *the Lord doth sanctify Israel*, has a title to them, and an interest in them more than other people, because *his sanctuary is*, and shall be *in the midst of them*. Note, God designs the sanctification of those among whom he sets up his sanctuary. And blessed and holy are they, who enjoying the privileges of the sanctuary, give such proofs and evidences of their sanctification, as that the heathen may know it is no less than the almighty grace of God that sanctifies them. Such have God's sanctuary in the midst of them, the kingdom of God within them, in the principles of the spiritual life, and shall have it so for evermore in the enjoyments of an eternal life.

C H A P. XXXVIII.

This chapter and that which follows it, are concerning Gog and Magog, a powerful enemy to the people of Israel, that should make a formidable descent upon them, and put them into a mighty fright; but their army should be routed, and their design defeated; and this prophecy, it is most probable, had its accomplishment some time after the return of the people of Israel out of their captivity; whether in the struggles they had with the kings of Syria, especially Antiochus Epiphanes, or perhaps in some other way not recorded, we cannot tell. If the sacred history of the Old Testament had reached as far as the prophecy, we should have been better able to understand these chapters, but for want of that key we are locked out of the meaning of them. God had by the prophet assured his people of happy times, after their return to their own land; but lest they should mistake the promises which related to the kingdom of the Messiah, and the spiritual privileges of that kingdom, as if from them they might promise themselves an uninterrupted temporal prosperity; he here tells them as Christ told his disciples to prevent the like mistake, that in the world they shall have tribulation, but they may be of good cheer, for they shall be victorious at last. This prophecy here of Gog and Magog, is without doubt alluded to in that prophecy which relates to the latter days, and which seems to be yet unfulfilled, *Rev. xx. 8*. That Gog and Magog shall be gathered to battle against the camp of the saints; as the Old Testament prophecies of the destruction of Babylon are alluded to, *Rev. xviii*. But in both the Old Testament prophecies had their accomplishment in the Jewish church, as the New Testament prophecies shall have when the time comes in the Christian church. In this chapter we have intermixed, (1.) The attempt that Gog and Magog should make upon the lands of Israel, the vast army they should bring into the field, and their vast preparations, *ver. 4—7*. Their project and design in it, *ver. 8—13*. God's hand in it, *ver. 4*. (2.) The great terror that this should strike upon the land of Israel, *ver. 15, 16, 18—20*. (3.) The divine restraint that these enemies should be under, and the divine protection that Israel should be under, *ver. 2—4*. And again, *ver. 14*. (4.) The defeat that should be given to those enemies by the immediate hand of God, *ver. 21—23*. which we shall hear more of in the next chapter.

1. **A**ND the word of the LORD came unto me saying, 2. Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3. And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. 4. And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy chaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all

all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords. 5. Persia, Ethiopia, and Lybia with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6. Gomer and all his bands, the house of Togarmah of the north-quarters, and all his bands, and many people with thee. 7. Be thou prepared, and prepare for thy self, thou and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. 8. ¶ After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou and all thy bands, and many people with thee. 10. Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought. 11. And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages, I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12. To take a spoil, and to take a prey, to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle, and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13. Sheba and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?

The critical expositors have enough to do here to enquire out Gog and Magog; we cannot pretend either to add to their observations, or to determine their controversies; Gog seems to be the king, and Magog the kingdom; so that Gog and Magog is like Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Some think they find them afar off in Scythia, Tartary, and Russia. Others think they find them nearer the land of Israel, in Syria and Asia the less. Ezekiel is appointed to prophesy against Gog, and to tell him that *God is against him*, ver. 2, 3. Note, God doth not only see those that are now the enemies of his church, and set himself against them, but he foresees those that will be so, and lets them know by his word that he is against them too, and yet is pleased to make use of them to serve his own purposes, for the glory of his own name; surely *their wrath shall praise him*, and the remainder thereof he will restrain, Psal. lxxvi. 10. Let us observe here,

1. The confusion which God designed to put this enemy to; it is remarkable, that this is put first in the prophecy; before it is foretold that God will bring him forth against Israel, it is foretold that God will put hooks into his jaws, and turn him back, ver. 4. that they might have assurance of their deliverance before they had the prospect given them of their danger. Thus tender is God of the comfort of his people, thus careful that they may not be frightened even before the trouble begins, he tells them it will end well.

2. The undertaking which he designed to engage him in, in order to this defeat and disappointment.

1. The nations that shall be confederate in this enterprize against Israel are many, and great, and mighty, ver. 5, 6. Persia, Ethiopia, &c. Antiochus had an army made up of all the nations here named, and many others. These people had been at variance with one another, and yet in combination against Israel. How are they increased that trouble God's people!

2. They are well furnished with arms and ammunition, and bring a good train of artillery into the field; *horses and horsemen*, ver. 4. bravely equipped, with all sorts of armour, bucklers and shields, for defence, and all handling swords for offence. Orders are given to make all imaginable preparation for this expedition, ver. 7. *Be thou prepared, and do thou prepare*. See what warlike preparations thou hast already in store, and lest that should not suffice make further preparation, *thou and all thy company*. Let Gog himself be a guard to the rest of the confederates: As commander in chief let him engage to take care of them and their safety; let him pass his word for their security, and take them under his particular protection. The leaders of an army instead of exposing their soldiers needlessly and presumptuously, and throwing away their lives upon desperate undertakings should study to be a guard to them, and whenever they send them forth in

danger should contrive to support and cover them. This call to prepare seems to be ironical, *do thy worst*, but I will turn thee back, like that Isa. viii. 9. *Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces*.

3. Their design is against the mountains of Israel, ver. 8. against the land that is brought back from the sword: It is not long since it was harrassed with the sword of war, and it has been always wasted, more or less, with one judgment or other; it is but newly gathered out of many people, and brought forth out of the nations, it has enjoyed comparatively, but a short breathing-time, has scarce recovered any strength since it was brought down by war and captivity, and therefore its neighbours need not fear its being too great, nay, and therefore it is very barbarous to pick a quarrel with it so soon. It is a people that dwells safely all of them, in unwall'd villages, very secure, and having neither bars nor gates, ver. 11. It is a certain sign they intend no mischief to their neighbours, for they fear no mischief from them. It cannot be thought they will offend others, who do not take care to defend themselves, and it aggravates the sin of these invaders. It is base and barbarous to devise evil against thy neighbour while he dwells securely by thee, and has no distrust of thee, Prov. iii. 29. But see here how the clouds return after the rain in this world, and what little reason we have ever to be secure till we come to heaven. It is not long since Israel was brought back from the sword of one enemy, and behold the sword of another is drawn against it; former troubles will not excuse us from further troubles; but when we think we have put off the harness, at least for some time, by a fresh and sudden alarm we may be called to gird it on again; and therefore we must never boast, or be off our guard.

4. That which the enemy has in view, in forming this project, is to enrich himself, and to make himself master not of the country, but of the wealth of it, to spoil and plunder it, and make a prey of it. At the same time that God intends to bring this matter about, things shall come into the mind of this enemy, and he shall think an evil thought, ver. 10. Note, All the mischief men do, and particularly the mischief they do to the church of God, ariseth from evil thoughts that come into their mind; ambitious thoughts, covetous thoughts, spiteful thoughts to those that are good, for the sake of their goodness. It came into Antiochus's mind what a singular people these religious Jews were, and how their worship witnessed against and condemned the idolatries of their neighbours, and therefore in enmity to their religion he would plague them. It came into his mind what a wealthy people they were, that they had gotten cattle and goods in the midst of the land, ver. 12. And withal how weak they were, and how unable to make any resistance, and how easy it would be to carry off what they had, and how much glory this rapine would add to his victorious sword; these things coming into his mind, and one evil thought drawing on another, he came at last to this resolve, ver. 11, 12. *I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages; yea, that I will, it will cost me nothing to make them all my own; I will go and disturb them that are at rest, without giving them any notice; not to crush their growing greatness, or chastise their insolence, or make reprisals upon them for any wrong they have done us: They had none of these pretences to make war upon them: But purely to take a spoil, and to take a prey*, ver. 12. in open defiance to all the laws of justice and equity; as much as the highwayman's killing the traveller, that he may take his money. These were the thoughts that came into the mind of this wicked prince, and God knew them; nay, he knew them before they came into his mind, for he understandeth our thoughts afar off, Psal. cxxxix. 2.

5. According to the project thus formed, he pours in all his forces upon the land of Israel; and finds those that are ready to come into his assistance upon the same prospects; ver. 9. *Thou shalt ascend, and come like a storm*, with all the force, and fury, and fierceness imaginable, and thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, to darken it, and to threaten it. Thou, and not only all thy bands, all the force thou canst bring into the field, but many people with thee, such as are spoken of, ver. 13. Sheba and Dedan, the Arabians and Edomites, and the merchants of Tarshish, of Tyre and Sidon, and other maritime cities, they and their young lions that are greedy of spoil, and live upon it, they shall say, *Art thou come to take the spoil of this land?* Yes, he is. And therefore they wish him success; or perhaps they envy him, or grudge it him: Art thou come for riches, who art thyself so rich already? Or knowing that God was on Israel's side, they thus ridicule his attempts, foreseeing they would be baffled, and that he would be disappointed of the prey he promised himself. Or, if he be come to take the prey, they will come and join with him, and add to his forces. When Lyfias, that was general of Antiochus's army, came against the Jews, the neighbour nations joined with him, 1 Mac. iii. 24. to share in the guilt, in hopes to share in the prey. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him.

14. ¶ Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD, In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15. And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north-parts, thou and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army. 16. And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land, it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. 17. Thus saith the Lord GOD, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days, many years, that I would bring thee against them? 18. And it shall come to pass at the same time, when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. 19. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken: surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel: 20. So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every mans sword shall be against his brother. 22. And I will plead against him with pestilence, and with blood, and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an over-flowing rain, and great hailstones, fire and brimstone. 23. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself, and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

This latter part of the chapter is a repetition of the former; the dream is doubled for the thing is certain, and to be very carefully regarded.

1. It is here again foretold, that this spiteful enemy should make a formidable descent upon the land of Israel, ver. 15. *Thou shalt come out of the north parts* (Syria lay on the north of Canaan) with a mighty army, shalt come like a cloud, and cover the land of my people Israel, ver. 16. These words, ver. 14. *When my people Israel dwell safely, shalt thou not know it?* may be taken two ways; either, (1.) As speaking his inducements to this attempt. Thou shalt have intelligence brought thee, how *securely*, and therefore how *carelessly* the people of Israel dwell, which shall give rise to thy project against them; for when thou knowest not only what a *rich* but what an *easy* prey they are likely to be, thou wilt soon determine to fall upon them. Note, God's providence is to be acknowledged in the *occasion*, the small *occasion* perhaps that is given, and that not designedly neither, to those *first thoughts* from which great enterprizes take their original. God, to bring about his own purposes, lets men know that which yet he knows they will make an ill use of; as here. Or, (2.) As speaking his disappointment in this attempt; which here as before, the prophecy begins with; *When my people Israel dwells safely*, not in their own apprehension only, but in reality, forasmuch as they dwell safely under the divine protection, shalt not thou be made to know it by the fruitlessness of thine endeavours, to destroy them? Thou shalt soon find that there is *no enchantment against Jacob*, that *no weapon formed against them shall prosper*; thou shalt know to thy cost, shalt know to thy shame, that though they have no walls, nor bars, nor gates, they have God himself, a wall of fire round about them, and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye; whosoever meddles with them meddles to his own hurt. And it is for the demonstrating of this to all the world that God will bring this mighty enemy against his people. They that gathered themselves against Israel, said, *Let us take the spoil and take the prey*, but they knew not the thoughts of the Lord, Mic. iv. 11, 12. *I will bring thee against my land*; that is strange news, that God will not only permit his enemies to come against his own children, but will himself bring them; but if we understand what he aims at we shall be well reconciled even to this, it is, that the heathen may know me, to be the only living and true God, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O God, i. e. in thy defeat and destruction before their eyes; that all the nations may see and say, *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heavens, for the help of his people*. Note, God therefore brings his people into danger and distress, that he may have the honour of bringing about their deliverance; and therefore suffers the enemies of his church to prevail a while, though

they profane his name by their sin, that he may have the honour of prevailing at last, and sanctifying his own name in their ruin. Now it is said this shall be *in the latter days*, viz. in the latter days of the Old Testament church; so the mischief that Antiochus did to Israel was; but in the *latter days* of the New Testament church, another like enemy should arise, that should in like manner be defeated. Note, Effectual securities are treasured up in the word of God against the troubles and dangers the church may be brought into a great while hence, even in the latter days.

2. Reference is herein had to the predictions of the former prophets, ver. 17. *Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time?* of whom Moses spoke in his prophecy of the latter days? Deut. xxxii. 43. *He will render vengeance to his adversaries*; and David, Psal. ix. 15. *The heathen are sunk down into the pit that they made*; and often elsewhere in the Psalms. This is the leviathan of whom Isaiah spake, Isa. xxvii. 1. that congress of the nations of which Joel spake, Joel iii. 1. Many of the prophets had perhaps spoken particularly of this event, though it be not written; as they all had spoken and written too, that which is applicable to it. Note, There is an amiable, admirable harmony and agreement between the Lord's prophets, though they lived in several ages, for they were all guided by one and the same Spirit.

3. It is here foretold that this furious formidable enemy should be utterly cut off in this attempt upon Israel; and it should issue in its own ruin. This is supposed by many to have its accomplishment in the many defeats given by the Maccabees to the forces of Antiochus, and the remarkable judgments of God executed upon his own person, for he died of sore diseases. But these things are here foretold, as usual, in figurative expressions which we are not to look for the literal accomplishment of, and yet they might be fulfilled nearer the letter than we know of:

1. God will be highly displeased with this bold invader; when he comes up in pride and anger against the land of Israel, and thinks to carry all before him with a high hand, then God's fury shall come up in his face, which is an allusion to the manner of men whose colour riseth in their faces when some high affront is offered them, and they are resolved to shew their resentments of it, ver. 18. God will speak against them in his jealousy for his people, and in the fire of his wrath against his and their enemies, ver. 19. See how God's permitting sin, his laying occasions of sin before men, and his making use of it to serve his own purposes, is very well consistent with his hatred of sin, and his displeasure against it: God brings this enemy against his land, letting him know what an easy prey it might be, and determining thereby to glorify himself; and yet when he comes against the land, God's fury comes up, and he speaks to him in the fire of his wrath; If any ask, why doth he thus find fault? For who hath resisted his will? It is easy to answer, *Nay, but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?*

2. His forces shall be put into the greatest confusion and consternation imaginable, ver. 19. there shall be a great shaking of them in the land of Israel, an universal concussion, ver. 20. such as shall affect the fishes and fowls, the beasts and creeping things, and much more the men that are upon the face of the earth, who sooner receive impressions of fear; there shall be such an earthquake as shall throw down the mountains, those natural heights, and the steep places, towers and walls, those artificial heights, they shall all fall to the ground. Some understand this of the fright which the land of Israel should be put into by the fury of the enemy. But it is rather to be understood of the fright which the enemy should be put into by the wrath of God; all those things which they both raise themselves and stay themselves upon, shall be shaken down, and their hearts shall fail them.

3. He shall be routed, and utterly ruined; both earth and heaven shall be armed against him. (1.) The earth shall muster up its forces to destroy him. If the people of Israel have not strength and courage to resist him, God will call for a sword against him, ver. 21. And he hath swords always at command, that are bathed in heaven, Isa. xxxv. 5. Throughout all the mountains of Israel, where he hoped to meet with spoil to enrich him, he shall meet with swords to destroy him, and rather than fail, every man's sword shall be against his brother, as in the day of Midian, Psal. lxxxiii. 9. The great men of Syria shall undermine and overthrow one another, shall accuse one another, shall fight duels with one another. Note, God can and often doth make the destroyers of his people to be their own destroyers, and the destroyers of one another. However, he will himself be their destroyer, will take the work into his own hand that it may be done thoroughly, ver. 22. *I will plead against him with pestilence and blood*. Note, Whom God acts against he pleads against, he shews them the ground of his controversy with them, that their mouths may be stopped, and he may be clear when he judgeth. (2.) The artillery of heaven shall also be drawn out against them, *I will rain upon him an overflowing rain*, ver. 22. He comes like a storm upon Israel, ver. 9. But God will come like a storm upon him; will rain upon him great hailstones, as upon the Canaanites, Josh. x. 11. fire and brimstone, as upon Sodom, and a horrible tempest, Psal. xi. 6. Thus the Gog and Magog in the New Testament shall be devoured with fire from heaven, and cast into the lake of brimstone, Rev. xx. 9, 10. That will be the everlasting

everlasting portion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of God's church and people.

4. God in all this will be glorified. The end he aimed at, ver. 16. shall be accomplished, ver. 23. *Thus will I magnify my self, and sanctify my self.* Note, In the destruction of sinners God makes it to appear that he is a great and holy God, and will do so to eternity. And if men do not magnify and sanctify him as they ought, he will magnify himself, and sanctify himself; and this we should desire and pray for daily, *Father, glorify thine own name.*

C H A P. XXXIX.

This chapter continues and concludes the prophecy against Gog and Magog; in whose destruction God crowns his favour to his people Israel, which shines very bright after the scattering of that black cloud, in the close of this chapter. Here is (1.) An express prediction of the utter destruction of Gog and Magog, agreeing with what we had before, ver. 1—7. (2.) An illustration of the vastness of that destruction in three consequences of it; the burning of their weapons, ver. 8—10. The burying of their slain, ver. 11—16. And the feasting of the fowls with the dead bodies of those that were unburied, ver. 17—23. (3.) A declaration of God's gracious purposes concerning his people Israel, in this and other his providences concerning them, and a promise of further mercy he had yet in store for them, ver. 23—29.

1. **T**herefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. 2. And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north-parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3. And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. 6. And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles, and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel, and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more; and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the holy One in Israel.

This prophecy begins, as that before, chap. xxxviii. 3, 4. *I am against thee, and I will turn thee back*; for there is need of line upon line, both for the conviction of Israel's enemies, and the comfort of Israel's friends. Here, as there, it is foretold, that God will bring this enemy from the north parts, as formerly the Chaldeans were fetched from the north, Jer. i. 14. (*Omne malum ab aquilone*) and long after the Roman empire over-run by the northern nations; that he will bring him upon the mountains of Israel, ver. 2. first, as a place of temptation, where the measures of his iniquity shall be filled up; and then, as a place of execution, where his ruin shall be completed. And that is it that is here enlarged upon.

1. His soldiers shall be *disarmed*, and so disabled to carry on their enterprize. Though the men of might may find their hands, yet to what purpose? when they find it is put out of their power to do mischief; when God shall smite their bow out of their left hand, and their arrow out of their right, ver. 3. Note, The weapons formed against Zion shall not prosper.

2. He and the greatest part of his army shall be slain in the field of battle, ver. 4. *Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel*; there they sinned, and there they shall perish; even upon the holy mountains of Israel, for there brake he the arrows of the bow, Psal. lxxvi. 3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened and fatned, and made fruitful with the blood of the enemies. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, ver. 5. and shalt not be able even there to make thine escape; even upon the mountains he shall not find a place that he shall be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by.

3. The mountains of Israel shall be moistened and fatned, and made fruitful with the blood of the enemies. Thou shalt fall upon the open field, ver. 5. and shalt not be able even there to make thine escape; even upon the mountains he shall not find a place that he shall be able to maintain, and upon the open field he shall not find a road that he shall be able to make his escape by. He and his bands, his regular troops, and the people that is with him, shall follow the camp to share in the plunder, these shall all fall with him. Note, Those that cast in their lot among wicked people, (Prov. i. 14.) that they may have one purse with them, No. lxx.

must expect to take their lot with them, and fare as they fare, taking the worse with the better. There shall be such a general slaughter made, that but a sixth part shall be left, ver. 2. the other five shall all be cut off. Never was army so totally routed as this. And for its greater infamy and reproach, their bodies shall be a feast to the birds of prey, ver. 4. compare, ver. 17. *Thou shalt fall, for I have spoken it.* Note, Rather shall the most illustrious princes, (Antiochus was called Epiphanes the illustrious) and the most numerous armies, fall to the ground, than any word of God; for he that hath spoken will make it good.

3. His country also shall be made desolate. *I will send a fire on Magog*, ver. 6. and among them that dwell carelessly, or confidently, in the isles, i. e. the nations of the Gentiles. He designed to destroy the land of Israel, but shall not only be defeated in that design, but shall have his own destroyed by some fire, some consuming judgment or other. Note, Those who invade other peoples rights justly lose their own.

4. God will by all this advance the honour of his own name, (1.) Among his people Israel; they shall hereby know more of God's name, of his power and goodness, his care of them, his faithfulness to them; his providence concerning them shall lead them into a better acquaintance with him; every providence should do so, as well as every ordinance. *I will make my holy name known in the midst of my people.* In Judah is God known; but those that know much of God should know more of him; we should especially increase in the knowledge of his name, as a holy name. Know him as a God of perfect purity and rectitude, and that hates all sin. And then it follows, *I will not let them pollute my holy name any more.* Note, Those that rightly know God's holy name will not dare to profane it; for it is through ignorance of it that men make light of it, and make bold with it. And this is God's method of dealing with men, first, to enlighten their understandings, and by that means to influence the whole man; he first makes us to know his holy name, and so keeps us from polluting it, and engageth us to honour it. And this is here the blessed effect of God's glorious appearances on the behalf of his people. Thus he compleats his favours, thus he sanctifies them, thus he makes them blessings indeed; by them he instructs his people, and reforms them. *When the Almighty scattered kings for her, she was white as snow in Salmon*, Psal. lxxviii. 14. (2.) Among the heathen; those that never knew it, or would not own it, shall know that *I am the Lord, the holy One in Israel.* They shall be made to know by dear-bought experience, that he is a God of power, and his peoples God and Saviour; and it is in vain for the greatest potentates to contend with him; none ever hardened their heart against him, and prospered.

8. ¶ Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken.

9. And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields, and the bucklers, the bows, and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: 10. So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests: for they shall burn the weapons with fire, and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD. 11. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea; and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog, and all his multitude, and they shall call it, the valley of Hamon-gog. 12. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them, and it shall be to them a renown, the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. 14. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land, to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. 15. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a mans bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. 16. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah: thus shall they cleanse the land. 17. ¶ And thou son of man, Thus saith the Lord GOD, Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves and come, gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18. Ye shall eat the flesh

flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. 21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day and forward.

Tho' this prophecy was to have its accomplishment in the latter days, yet it is here spoken of as if it were already accomplished, because it is certain, *ver. 8. Behold, it is come, and it is done*, it is as sure to be done, when the time is come, as if it were done already; *this is the day, whereof I have long, and often spoken*, and tho' it has been long in coming yet at length *it is come*. Thus it was said unto John, *Rev. xxi. 6. It is done*.

To represent the routing of the army of Gog as very great, here are three things instanced in as the consequences of it. It was God himself that gave them the defeat, we do not find that the people of Israel drew a sword, or struck a stroke; But,

1. They shall burn their weapons; their bows and arrows, which fell out of their hands, *ver. 3. their shields and bucklers, their javelins, spears, their leading staves, truncheons, and half-pikes*, every thing that is combustible; they shall not lay them up in their armories, or reserve them for their own use, lest they should be tempted to put a confidence in them, but burn them; not all at once for a bonfire, to what purpose would be that waste? but as they had occasion to use them for fuel in their houses, instead of other fire-wood, so that they should have no occasion to take wood out of the field or forests, for seven years together, *ver. 10. such vast quantities of weapons shall there be left upon the open field, where the enemy fell, and in the roads which they passed in their flight; the weapons were dry and fitter for fuel than green wood; and by saving the wood in their copices, and forests, they gave it time to grow; tho' the mountains of Israel produce plenty of all good things, yet it becomes the people of Israel to be good husbands of their plenty, and to save what they can for the benefit of those that come after them; as providence shall give them opportunity to do so. We may suppose when they that dwelt in the cities of Israel came forth to spoil those that spoiled them, and make reprisals upon them, they found upon them silver and gold and ornaments, yet no mention is made of any thing particularly that they converted to their own use, but the wood of the weapons for fuel, which is one of the necessities of human life; to teach us, to think it enough if we be well supplied with those, tho' we have but little of the delights and gaieties of it, and of those things which we may very well live without. And every time they put fuel to the fire, and warmed themselves at it, they would be put in mind of the number and strength of their enemies, and the imminent peril they were in of falling into their hands, which would help to enlarge their hearts in thankfulness to that God who had so wonderfully, so seasonably, delivered them. As they sat by the fire with their children about them, (their fire-side) they might from it, take occasion to tell them what great things God had done for them.*

2. They shall bury their dead. Usually after a battle when many are slain, the enemy desires time to bury their own dead. But here the slaughter shall be so general that there shall not be enow of the enemies left alive to bury the dead; and besides, the slain lie so dispersed on the mountains of Israel, that it would be a work of time to find them out. And therefore it is left to the house of Israel to bury them as a piece of triumph in their overthrow.

1. A place shall be appointed on purpose for the burying of them; *viz. the valley of the passengers, on the east of the sea*, either the salt sea, or the sea of Tiberias, a valley through which there was great passing and repassing of travellers between Egypt and Chaldea; there shall be such a multitude of dead bodies, putrefying above ground, with such a loathsome stench, that the travellers that go that way shall be forced to stop their noses. See what vile bodies ours are, when the soul has been a little while from them, the smell of them becomes offensive, no smell more nauseous or more noxious. There therefore where the greatest number lay slain shall the burying place be appointed. In the place where the tree falls there let it lie. And it shall be called, *The valley of Hamon-gog*, i. e. of the multitude of Gog, for that was the thing which was in a particular manner to be had in remembrance; how numerous the forces of the enemies were, which God defeated and destroyed for the defence of his people Israel.

2. A considerable time shall be spent in burying them, no less than *seven months*, *ver. 22. which is a further intimation, that the slain of the Lord in this action should be many; and that great care should be taken by the house of Israel to leave none unburied, that so they may cleanse the land, from the ceremonial pollution it contracted by the lying of so many dead corpses unburied in it; for the prevention of which, it was appointed that those who were hanged on a tree should be speedily taken down and buried*, *Deut. xxi. 23. This is an intimation that times of eminent deliverances should be times of reformation. The more God has done for the saving of a land from ruin, the more the inhabitants should do for the cleansing of the land from sin.*

3. Great numbers shall be employed in this work. *All the people of the land shall be ready to lend a helping hand to it, ver. 13. Note, Every one should contribute the utmost he can in his place towards the cleansing of the land from the pollutions of it, and from every thing that is a reproach to it. Sin is a common enemy which every man should take up arms against. In publico discrimine unusquisque homo miles est. And whoever shall assist in this work, it shall be to them a renown; tho' the office of grave-makers, or common scavengers of the country, seem but mean, yet when it is for the cleansing and purifying of the land from dead works, it shall be mentioned to their honour. Note, Acts of humanity add much to the renown of God's Israel; it is a credit to religion when those that profess it are ready to every good work; and a good work it is to bury the dead, yea, tho' they be strangers and enemies to the commonwealth of Israel, for even they shall rise again. It shall be a renown to them in the day when God will be glorified. Note, It is for the glory of God, when his Israel do that which adorns their profession; others will will see their good works, and glorify their Father, Mat. v. 16. And when God is honoured he will put honour upon his people. His glory is their renown.*

4. Some particular persons shall make it their business to search out the dead bodies, or any part of them that should remain unburied. *The people of the land will soon grow weary of burying the pollutions of the country, and therefore they shall appoint men of continual employment, that should apply themselves to it, and do nothing else till the land was thoroughly cleansed; for otherwise that which is every one's work would soon become nobody's work. Note, Those that are engaged in publick work, especially for the cleansing and reforming a land, ought to be men of continual employments, men that will stick to what they undertake, and go through with it, men that will apply themselves to it; and those that will do good according to their opportunities will find themselves continually employed.*

5. Even the passengers shall be ready to give information to those whose business it is to cleanse the land of what publick nuisances they meet with, which call for their assistance; they that pass through the land, tho' they will not stay to bury the dead themselves, lest they should contract a ceremonial pollution, yet they will give notice of those that they find unburied. If they but discover a bone, they will set up a sign, that the buriers may come and bury it; and that till it is buried others may take heed of touching it; for which reason their sepulchres among the Jews were whited, that people might keep at a distance from them. Note, When good work is to be done, every one should lend a hand to further it, even the passengers themselves; who must not think themselves unconcerned in a common calamity, or a common iniquity, to put a stop to it?

Those whose work it is to cleanse the land, must not countenance any thing in it that is defiling; tho' it were not the body, but only the bone of a man that was found unburied, they must encourage those who will give information of it, *private information*, by a sign, concealing the informer, that they may take it away, and bury it out of sight. Nay, after the end of seven months, which was allowed them for this work, when all is taken away that appeared at first view, they shall search for more, that what is hidden may be brought to light; they shall search out iniquity till they find none. In memory of this, they shall give a new name to their city. It shall be called Hamonah, the multitude; O what a multitude of our enemies have we of this city buried! Thus shall they cleanse the land, with all this care, with all this pains, *ver. 16. Note, After conquering there must be cleansing. Moses appointed those Israelites, that had been employed in the war with the Midianites, to purify themselves, Numb. xxxi. 24. Having received special favours from God, Let us cleanse our selves from all filthiness.*

3. The birds and beasts of prey shall rest upon the carcases of the slain, while they remain unburied, and it shall be impossible to prevent it, *ver. 17, &c. We find a great slaughter represented by this figure, Rev. xix. 17, &c. which is borrowed from this.*

1. There is a general invitation given, *ver. 17. it is to the fowl of every wing, and to every beast of the field, from the greatest to the least, that preys upon carcases, from the eagle to the raven, from the lion to the dog, let them all gather themselves on every side, here is meat enough for them, and they are all welcome. Let them come to God's sacrifice, to his feast, to the margin reads it. Note, The judgments of God executed upon sin and*

and sinners are both a sacrifice and a feast; a sacrifice to the justice of God, and a feast to the faith and hope of God's people; when God brake the head of leviathan, he gave him to be meat to Israel, Psal. lxxiv. 19. *The righteous shall rejoice as at a feast, when he sees the vengeance, and shall wash his foot, as at a feast, in the blood of the wicked.* This sacrifice is upon the mountains of Israel, these are the high places, the altars, where God had been dishonoured by the idolatries of the people, but where he will now glorify himself, in the destruction of his enemies.

2. There is great preparation made. They shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, ver. 18, 19. (1.) It is the flesh and blood of men that they shall be treated with. This has sometimes been an instance of the rebellion of the inferior creatures against man, their master, which is an effect of his rebellion against God, his maker. (2.) It is the flesh and blood of great men, here called rams and bullocks, and great goats, all of them fatlings of Bashan. It is the blood of the princes of the earth, that they shall regale themselves with: what a mortification is this to the princes of the blood, as they call themselves, that God can make that blood, that royal blood which swells their veins, a feast for the birds and beasts of prey. (3.) It is the flesh and blood of wicked men, the enemies of God's church and people, that they are invited to. They had accounted the Israel of God as sheep for the slaughter, and now they shall themselves be so accounted; they had thus used the dead bodies of God's servants; Psal. lxxix. 2. or would have done, and now it shall come upon themselves.

3. They shall all be fed, they shall all be feasted to the full, ver. 19, 20. *Ye shall eat fat, and drink blood,* which are satiating, surfeiting things. The sacrifice is great, and the feast upon the sacrifice is accordingly. *You shall be filled at my table.* Note, God keeps a table for the inferior creatures; he provideth food for all flesh; and the eyes of all wait upon him; and he satisfies their desires, for he keeps a plentiful table. And if the birds and beasts shall be filled at God's table, which he hath prepared for them, much more shall his children be abundantly satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple. They shall be filled with horses and chariots, i. e. those that ride in the chariots, mighty men, and men of war, who triumphed over nations, are now themselves triumphed over by the ravens of the valley, and the young eagles, Prov. xxx. 17. They thought to have made an easy prey of God's Israel, and now they are themselves an easy prey to the birds and beasts. See how evil pursues sinners, even after death. This exposing of their bodies to be a prey, is but a type and sign of those terrors that after death shall prey upon their consciences, (which the poetical fictions represented by a vulture continually pecking at the heart) and this shame but an earnest of the everlasting shame and contempt they shall rise to.

4. This shall redound very much both to the glory of God, and to the comfort and satisfaction of his people.

1. It shall be much for the honour of God, for the heathen shall hereby be made to know that he is the Lord, ver. 21. *All the heathen shall see and observe my judgments, that I have executed, and thereby my glory shall be set among them.* This principle shall be admitted, and established among them more than ever, that the God of Israel is a great and glorious God. He is known to be so even among the heathen, that have not, or read not, his written word, by the judgments which he executeth.

2. It shall be much for the satisfaction of his people; for they shall hereby be made to know, that he is their God. Ver. 22. *The house of Israel shall know abundantly to their comfort, that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward.* (1.) He will be so from that day and forward; God's present mercies are pledges and assurances of further mercies. If God evidence to us that he is our God, he assures us that he will never leave us; *this God is our God for ever and ever.* (2.) They shall know it with more satisfaction from that day and forward. They had sometimes been ready to question, whether the Lord was with them or no; but the events of this day shall silence their doubts, and the matter being thus settled, and made clear, it shall not be doubted of for the future. As boasting in themselves is hereby for ever excluded, so boasting in God is hereby for ever secured.

23. ¶ And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies; so fell they all by the sword. 24. According to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Now, will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name: 26. After that they have born their shame, and all their trespasses, where-

by they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. 27. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28. Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter going before, and hath reference not only to the predictions concerning Gog and Magog, but to all the prophecies of this book concerning the captivity of the house of Israel, and then concerning their restoration and return out of their captivity.

1. God will let the heathen know the meaning of his peoples troubles, and rectify their mistake concerning them, who took occasion from the troubles of Israel, to reproach the God of Israel, as unable to protect them, and untrue to his covenant with them. When God upon their reformation, and return to him, turned again their captivity, and brought them back to their own land, and upon their perseverance in their reformation wrought such great salvations for them, as that from the attempts of Gog upon them, then it will be made to appear even to the heathen, that will but consider and compare things, that there was no ground at all for their reflection, that Israel went into captivity, not because God could not protect them, but because they had by sin forfeited his favour, and thrown themselves out of his protection. Ver. 23, 24. *The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity,* that iniquity which they learned from the heathen their neighbours; *because they trespassed against God.* That was the true reason why God hid his face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies. It was according to their uncleanness, and according to their transgressions. Now the evincing of this will not only silence their reflections on God, but will redound greatly to his honour; when the troubles of God's people are over, and we see the end of them, we shall better understand them than we did at first. And it will appear much for the glory of God when the world is made to know, (1.) That God punisheth sin even in his own people, because he hates it most in those that are nearest and dearest to him, Amos iii. 2. It is the praise of justice to be impartial. (2.) That when God gives up his people for a prey, it is to correct them, and reform them, not to gratify their enemies, Isa. x. 7.—xlii. 24. Let not them therefore exalt themselves. (3.) That no sooner do God's people humble themselves under the rod, but he returns in mercy to them.

2. God will give his own people to know, what great favour he has in store for them, notwithstanding the troubles he had brought them into; ver. 25, 26. *Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob.*

1. Why now? Now God will have mercy upon the whole house of Israel; (1.) Because it is time for him to stand up for his own glory, which suffers in their sufferings; *now will I be jealous for my holy name,* that that may no longer be reproached. (2.) Because now they repent of their sins; they have born their shame, and all their trespasses; when sinners repent, and take shame to themselves, God will be reconciled, and put honour upon them. It is particularly pleasing to God, that these penitents look a great way back in their penitential reflections, and are ashamed of all their trespasses which they were guilty of, *when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.* The remembrance of the mercies they enjoyed in their own land, and the divine protection they were under there, shall be improved as an aggravation of the sins they committed in that land; they dwelt safely, and might have continued to dwell so, and none should have given them any disquiet, or disturbance, if they had continued in the way of their duty. Nay, therefore they trespassed, because they dwelt safely; outward safety is often a cause of inward security, and that is an inlet to all sin, Psal. lxxiii. Now this they are willing to bear the shame of, and acknowledge that God hath justly brought them into a land of trouble, where every one makes them afraid, because they had trespassed against him in a land of peace, where none made them afraid. And when they thus humble themselves under humbling providences, God will bring again their captivity: And,

2. What then? When God has gathered them out of their enemies hands, and brought them home again;

(1.) Then God will have the praise of it; I will be sanctified in them in the sight of many nations, ver. 2. As God was reproached in the reproach they were under during their captivity, so he will be sanctified in their reformation, and the making of them a holy people again, and will be glorified in their restoration, and the making of them a happy glorious people again.

(2.) Then

(2.) Then they shall have the benefit of it, ver. 28. They shall know that I am the Lord their God. Note, The providences of God concerning his people that are designed for their good, have the grace of God going along with them, to teach them to eye God as the Lord, and their God in all, and then they do them good. They shall eye him as the Lord, and their God. (1.) In their calamities, that it was he that caused them to be led into captivity; and therefore they must not only submit to his will, but endeavour to answer his end in it. (2.) In their comfort, that it is he that has gathered them to their own land, and left none of them among the heathen. Note, By the variety of events that are concerning us, if we look up to God in all, we may come to acquaint our selves better with his various attributes and designs.

(3.) Then God and they will never part, ver. 29. (1.) God will pour out his Spirit upon them, to prevent their departures from him, and returns to folly again, and to keep them close to their duty. And then (2.) He will never hide his face any more from them, will never suspend his favour as he had done: He will never turn from doing them good, and in order to that he will effectually provide that they shall never turn from doing him service. Note, The indwelling of the Spirit is an infallible pledge of the continuance of God's favour. He will hide his face no more from those on whom he has poured out his Spirit. When therefore we pray that God would never cast us away from his presence, we must as earnestly pray that in order to that, he would never take his holy Spirit away from us, Psal. li. 11.

C H A P. XL.

The waters of the sanctuary which this prophet saw in vision, chap. xlvii. 1. are a proper representation of this prophecy. Hitherto the waters have been sometimes but to the ankles, in other places to the knees, or to the loins, but now the waters are risen, and are become a river which cannot be passed over. Here is one continued vision beginning at this chapter, to the end of the book, which is justly looked upon to be one of the most difficult portions of scripture in all the book of God. The Jews will not allow any to read it till they are thirty years old, and tell those who do read it, that tho' they cannot understand every thing in it, yet when Elias comes he will explain it. Many commentators, both ancient and modern, have owned themselves at a loss what to make of it, and what use to make of it: But because it is hard to be understood, we must not therefore throw it by, but humbly search concerning it, get as far as we can into it, and as much as we can out of it; and when we despair of satisfaction in every difficulty we meet with, bless God that our salvation doth not depend upon it, but things necessary are plain enough; and wait till God shall reveal even this unto us. These chapters are the more to be regarded, because the two last chapters of the Revelation seem to have a plain allusion to them, as Rev. xx. has to the foregoing prophecy of Gog and Magog. Here is the vision of a glorious temple, in this chapter, and chap. xli. and xlii. Of God's taking possession of it, chap. xliii. Orders concerning the priests that are to minister in this temple, chap. xlv. The division of the land, what portion should be allotted for the sanctuary, what for the city, and what for the prince both in his government of the people, and his worship of God, chap. xlv. and further instructions for him and the people, chap. xlv. And after the vision of the holy waters, we have the borders of the holy land, and the portions assigned to the tribes, and the dimensions and gates of the holy city, chap. xlvii. xlviii. Some make this to represent what had been during the flourishing state of the Jewish church; how glorious Solomon's temple was in its best days, that the captives might see what they had lost by sin, and might be the more humbled. But that seems not probable. The general scope of it I take to be (1.) To assure the captives that they should not only return to their own land, and be settled there, which had been often promised in the foregoing chapters, but that they should have, and therefore should be encouraged to build, another temple, which God would own, and where he would meet them, and bless them. That the ordinances of worship should be revived, and the sacred priesthood should there attend; and tho' they should not have a king to live in such splendor as formerly, yet they should have a prince or ruler (who is often spoken of in this vision) that should countenance the worship of God amongst them, and should himself be an example of diligent attendance upon it. And that prince, priests, and people, should have a very comfortable settlement and subsistence in their own land. (2.) To direct them to look further than all this, and to expect the coming of the Messiah, who had before been prophesied of under the name of David; because he was the man that projected the building of the temple; and who should set up a spiritual temple, even the gospel-church, the glory of which should far exceed that of Solomon's temple, and which should continue to the end of time. And the dimensions of these visionary buildings are so large, the new temple bigger than all the old Jerusalem, and the new Jerusalem big-

ger than all the land of Canaan, plainly intimates, as Dr Lightfoot observes, that these things cannot be literally, but must be spiritually understood. And the gospel temple erected by Christ, and his apostles, was so closely connected with the second material temple, was erected so carefully just at the time when that fell into decay, that it might be ready to receive its glories when it resigned them, it was proper enough that they should both be referred to in one and the same vision. Under the type and figure of a temple and altar, priests and sacrifices, is foreshewed the spiritual worship that should be performed in gospel times, more agreeably to the nature both of God and man; and that perfected at last in the kingdom of glory, in which perhaps these visions will have their full accomplishment; and some think in some happy and glorious state of the gospel church on this side heaven, in the latter days. In this chapter we have, (1.) A general account of this vision of the temple and city, ver. 1—4. (2.) A particular account of it entered upon; and a description given, (1.) Of the out-wall, ver. 5. (2.) Of the east gate, ver. 6—19. (3.) Of the north gate, ver. 20—23. (4.) Of the south gate, ver. 24—31. and the chambers, and other appurtenances belonging to these gates. (5.) Of the inner court, both towards the east, and towards the south, ver. 32—38. (6.) Of the tables, ver. 39—43. (7.) Of the lodgings for the singers and the priests, ver. 44—47. (8.) Of the porch of the house, ver. 48, 49.

1. **I**N the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the self-same day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither. 2. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. 3. And he brought me thither, and behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring-reed; and he stood in the gate. 4. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee, art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision. It was in the twenty-fifth year of Ezekiel's captivity, ver. 1. which some compute to be the thirty-third year of the first captivity, and is here said to be the fourteenth year after the city was smitten. See how seasonably the clearest and fullest prospects of their deliverance were given, then when they were in the depths of their distress; and an assurance of the return of the morning, then when they were in the midnight of their captivity. Then the hand of the Lord was upon me, and brought me thither to Jerusalem, now it was in ruins, desolate and deserted, a piteous sight to the prophet.

2. The scene where it was laid. The prophet was brought in the visions of God to the land of Israel, ver. 2. And it was not the first time he had been brought thither in vision; we had him carried to Jerusalem to see it in its iniquity and shame; chap. viii. 3. here he is carried thither to have a pleasing prospect of it in its glory, tho' its present aspect, now it was quite depopulated, was dismal. He was set upon a very high mountain, as Moses upon the top of Pisgah to view this land, which was now a second time a land of promise, not yet in possession. From the top of this mountain he saw as the frame of a city, the plan and model of it; but this city was a temple as large as a city. The new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 22. had no temple therein; this here is all temple which comes much to one. It is a city for men to dwell in; it is a temple for God to dwell in; for in the church on earth God dwells with men, in that in heaven men dwell with God. Both these are framed in the counsel of God, framed by infinite wisdom, and all very good.

3. The particular discoveries of this city, (which he had at first a general view of) were made to him by a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, ver. 3. not a created angel, but Jesus Christ, who should be found in fashion as a man, that he might both discover and build the gospel temple. He brought him to this city, for it is through Christ that we have both acquaintance with, and access to, the benefits and privileges of God's house. He it is that shall build the temple of the Lord, Zech. vi. 13. His appearing like brass speaks both his brightness and his strength. John in vision saw his feet like unto fine brass, Rev. i. 13.

4. The dimensions of this city or temple, and the several parts of it were taken with a line of flax and a measuring reed, or rod, ver. 3. as carpenters have both their line, and a wooden measure. The temple of God is built by line and rule, and those that would let others into the knowledge of it must do it by

by that line and rule. The church is formed according to the scripture; the *pattern in the mount*. That is the *line* and the *measuring reed*, that is in the hand of Christ; with that, doctrine and laws ought to be measured, and examined by that, for then *peace is upon the Israel of God*, when they *walk according to that rule*.

5. Directions are here given to the prophet to receive this revelation from the Lord, and transmit it pure and entire to the church, *ver. 5.* (1.) He must carefully observe every thing that was said and done in this vision. His attention is raised and engaged, *ver. 4.* *Behold with thine eyes all that is shewed thee*; do not only see it but look intently upon it; and *hear with thine ears all that is said to thee*, diligently hearken to it, and be sure to *set thine heart upon it*; attend with a fixedness of thought, and a close application of mind. What we see of the works of God, and what we *hear* of the word of God, will do us no good unless we *set our hearts* upon it, as those that reckon our selves nearly concerned in it, and expect advantage to our souls by it. (2.) He must faithfully declare it to the house of Israel, that they may have the comfort of it, therefore he *receives* that he may give. Thus the *Revelation of Jesus Christ* was lodged in the hands of John that he might signify it to the churches, *Rev. i. 1.* And because he is to declare it as a message from God, he must therefore be fully apprized of it himself, and much affected with it. Note, Those who are to preach God's word to others ought to study it well themselves, and *set their hearts upon it*. Now the reason given why he must both observe it himself, and declare it to the house of Israel, is because to this intent he is brought hither, and has it shewed him. Note, When the things of God are shewed us, it concerns us to consider to what intent they are shewed us; and when we are sitting under the ministry of the word, to consider to what intent we are brought thither, that we may answer the end of our coming, and may not receive the grace of God in shewing us such things in vain.

5. And behold, a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the mans hand a measuring reed of six cubits long, by the cubit, and an hand-breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building one reed, and the height one reed. 6. ¶ Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad, and the other threshold of the gate, which was one reed broad. 7. And every little chamber was one reed long, and one reed broad, and between the little chambers were five cubits, and the threshold of the gate, by the porch of the gate within was one reed. 8. He measured also the porch of the gate within, one reed. 9. Then measured he the porch of the gate, eight cubits, and the posts thereof two cubits, and the porch of the gate was inward. 10. And the little chambers of the gate east-ward, were three on this side, and three on that side, they three were of one measure, and the posts had one measure on this side and on that side. 11. And he measured the breadth of the entry of the gate ten cubits, and the length of the gate thirteen cubits. 12. The space also before the little chambers was one cubit on this side, and the space was one cubit on that side, and the little chambers were six cubits on this side, and six cubits on that side. 13. He measured then the gate from the roof of one little chamber to the roof of another: the breadth was five and twenty cubits, door against door. 14. He made also posts of three-score cubits, even unto the post of the court round about the gate. 15. And from the face of the gate of the entrance, unto the face of the porch of the inner gate, were fifty cubits. 16. And there were narrow windows to the little chambers, and to their posts within the gate round about, and likewise to the arches: and windows were round about inward: and upon each post were palm-trees. 17. Then brought he me into the outward court, and lo, there were chambers, and a pavement made for the court round about: thirty chambers were upon the pavement. 18. And the pavement by the side of the gates, over against the length of the gates, was the lower pavement. 19. Then he measured the breadth from the forefront of the lower gate, unto the forefront of the inner court without, an hundred cubits east-ward, and north-ward. 20. ¶ And the gate of the outward court that looked toward the north, he measured the length thereof, and the breadth there-
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of. 21. And the little chambers thereof were three on this side, and three on that side, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof were after the measure of the first gate: the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 22. And their windows, and their arches, and their palm-trees, were after the measure of the gate that looketh towards the east, and they went up unto it by seven steps, and the arches thereof were before them. 23. And the gate of the inner court was over-against the gate toward the north, and toward the east, and he measured from gate to gate an hundred cubits. 24. ¶ After that, he brought me toward the south, and behold, a gate toward the south, and he measured the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, according to these measures. 25. And there were windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about, like those windows; the length was fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 26. And there were seven steps to go up to it, and the arches thereof were before them, and it had palm-trees, one on this side, and another on that side, upon the posts thereof.

The measuring-reed which was in the hand of the surveyor-general was mentioned before, *ver. 3.* Here we are told, *ver. 5.* what was the exact length of it, which must be observed, because the house was measured by it. It was six cubits long, reckoning not by the common cubit, but the cubit of the sanctuary, the sacred cubit, by which it was fit this holy house should be measured, and that was a hand-breadth, i. e. four inches longer than the common cubit; the common cubit was eighteen inches, this twenty two, see chap. xliii. 13. yet some of the critics contend, that this measuring-reed was but six common cubits in length, and one hand-breadth added to the whole. The former seems more probable. Here is an account,

1. Of the outer wall of the house, which compassed it round, which was three yards thick, and three yards high, which notes the separation between the church and the world on every side; and the divine protection which the church is under. If a wall of this vast thickness will not secure it, God himself will be a wall of fire round about it, whoever attack it, it is at their peril.

2. Of the several gates with the chambers adjoining to them. Here is no mention of the outer court of all, which was called the court of the Gentiles; some think, because in gospel times there should be such a vast confluence of Gentiles to the church, that their court should be left unmeasured, to signify that the worshippers in that court should be unnumbered, *Rev. vii. 9, 11, 12.*

1. He begins with the east gate, because that was the usual way of entering into the lower end of the temple; the holy of holies being at the west end, in opposition to the idolatrous heathen that worshipped towards the east. Now in the account of this gate observe,

(1.) That he went up to it by stairs, *ver. 6.* for the gospel-church was exalted above that of the Old Testament, and when we go to worship God we must ascend; so is the call, *Rev. iv. 1.* Come up hither; *Sursum corda*, Up with your hearts.

(2.) That the chambers adjoining to the gates were but little chambers, about ten foot square, *ver. 7.* These were for those to lodge in who attended the service of the house. And it becomes such who are made spiritual priests to God to content themselves with little chambers, and not to seek great things to themselves; so that we may but have a place within the verge of God's court; we have reason to be thankful though it be in a little chamber, a mean apartment, though we be but door-keepers there.

(3.) The chambers as they were each of them four-square, noting their stability and due proportion, and their exact agreement with the rule, for they were each of them one reed long, and one reed broad, so they were all of one measure, that there might be an equality among the attendants on the service of the house.

(4.) The chambers were very many; for in our Father's house there are many mansions, *Joh. xiv. 2.* in his house above, and in that here on earth. In the secret of his tabernacle shall those be hid, and in a safe pavilion, whose desire is to dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of their life, *Psal. xxvii. 4, 5.* Some make these chambers to represent the particular congregations of believers, which are parts of the great temple the universal church, which are and must be framed by the scriptures line and rule, and which Jesus Christ takes the measure of, that is, takes cognizance of, for he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.

(5.) It is said, *ver. 14.* He made also the posts. He that now measured them was the same that made them, for Christ is the builder of his church, and therefore is best able to give us the knowledge

knowledge of it. And his reducing them to the rule and standard is called his *making* of them, for no account is made of them further than they agree with that, *to the law, and to the testimony.*

(6.) Here are posts of sixty cubits, which some think was literally fulfilled, when Cyrus, in his edict for rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, ordered that the height thereof should be sixty cubits, i. e. thirty yards and more, *Ezra vi. 3.*

(7.) Here were windows to the *little chambers*, and windows to the *posts and arches*, i. e. to the cloysters below, and windows round about, ver. 16. to signify the light from heaven with which the church is illuminated; divine revelation is let into it for instruction, direction, and comfort, to those that dwell in God's house; light to work by, light to walk by, light to see themselves and one another by. There were lights to the *little chambers*; even the least, and least considerable parts and members of the church, shall have light afforded them: *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* But they are *narrow windows*, as those in the temple, 1 *Kings vi. 4.* The discoveries made to the church on earth are but narrow and scanty, compared with what shall be in the future state, when we shall no longer *see through a glass darkly.*

(8.) Divers *courts* are here spoken of; an outer-most of all, then an outer-court, then an inner, and then the innermost of all, into which the priests only entred; which some think may put us in mind "of the diversities of gifts and graces, and offices in "the several members of Christ's mystical body here; as also of "the several degrees of glory in the courts and mansions of "heaven; as there are stars in several spheres, and stars of several "magnitudes in the fixed firmament. *Engl. Annot.*" Some draw nearer to God than others, and have a more intimate acquaintance with divine things, but to a child of God *a day* in any of his courts is *better than a thousand* elsewhere. These courts had porches or piazzas round them, for the shelter of those that attended in them from wind and weather, for when we are in the way of our duty to God, we may believe ourselves to be under his special protection; that he will graciously provide for us, nay, that he will himself be to us a covert *from the storm and tempest*, *Isa. iv. 5, 6.*

(9.) On the posts were *palm-trees* engraven, ver. 16. to signify that *the righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree*, in the courts of God's house, *Psal. xcii. 12.* The more they are *depressed* with the burthen of affliction, the more strongly do they *grow*, as they say of the *palm-trees*. It likewise intimates the saints victory and triumph over their spiritual enemies; they have *palms* in their hands, *Rev. vii. 4.* but lest they should drop these, or have them snatched out of their hands, they are here engraven upon the *posts* of the temple as perpetual monuments of their honour; *Thanks be to God who always causeth us to triumph.* Nay, believers shall themselves be made pillars in the temple of our God, and shall *go no more out*, and shall have his name engraven on them, which will be their brightest ornament and honour, *Rev. iii. 12.*

(10.) Notice is here taken of the *pavement* of the court, ver. 17, 18. The word intimates that the pavement was made of *porphyry-stone*, which was of the colour of *burning coals*; for the brightest and most sparkling glories of this world, should be put and kept *under our feet* when we draw near to God, and are attending upon him. The stars are as it were the *burning coals*, or stones of a *fiery colour*, with which the pavement of God's celestial temple is laid; and if the pavement of the court be so bright and glittering, how glorious must we conclude the mansions of that house to be!

2. The gates that looked towards the *north*, ver. 20. and towards the *south*, ver. 24. with their appurtenances, are much the same with that towards the *east*, after the measure of the *first gate*, ver. 21. But the description is repeated very particularly. And thus largely was the structure of the tabernacle related in Exodus, and of the temple in the books of Kings and Chronicles, to signify the special notice God *doth take*, and his ministers *should take* of all that belong to his church; his delight is in them, his eye is upon them. He knows all that are his, all his living temples, and all that belongs to them. Observe,

1. This temple had not only a gate towards the *east*, to let into it the *children of the east*, that were famous for their wealth and wisdom; but it had a gate to the *north*, and another to the *south*, for the admission of the poorer and less civilized nations. The new Jerusalem has *twelve gates*, three towards each quarter of the world, *Rev. xxi. 13.* for many shall come from all parts to sit down there, *Matt. viii. 11.*

2. To those gates they went up by *steps, seven steps*, ver. 22—26. which, as some observe, may mind us of the necessity of advancing in grace and holiness, adding one grace to another. Going from step to step, *from strength to strength*, still pressing forwards towards perfection. Upwards, upwards towards heaven, the temple above.

27. And *there was* a gate in the inner court toward the south, and he measured from gate to gate toward

the south an hundred cubits. 28. And he brought me to the inner court by the south-gate, and he measured the south gate according to these measures: 29. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof according to these measures, and *there were* windows in it, and in the arches thereof round about: *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 30. And the arches round about *were* five and twenty cubits long, and five cubits broad. 31. And the arches thereof *were* toward the utter court, and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof; and the going up to it *had* eight steps. — 32. ¶ And he brought me into the inner court toward the east, and he measured the gate according to these measures. 33. And the little chambers thereof, and the posts thereof, and the arches thereof *were* according to these measures, and *there were* windows therein, and in the arches thereof round about; *it was* fifty cubits long, and five and twenty cubits broad. 34. And the arches thereof *were* toward the outward court, and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof on this side, and on that side, and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 35. ¶ And he brought me to the north-gate, and measured *it* according to these measures: 36. The little chambers thereof, the posts thereof, and the arches thereof, and the windows to it round about: the length *was* fifty cubits, and the breadth five and twenty cubits. 37. And the posts thereof *were* towards the utter court, and palm-trees *were* upon the posts thereof on this side, and on that side, and the going up to it *had* eight steps. 38. And the chambers and the entries thereof *were* by the posts of the gates, where they washed the burnt-offering.

In these verses we have a delineation of the *inner court*; The survey of the outer court ended with the south-side of it. This of the inner court begins with the south-side, ver. 27. proceeds to the east, ver. 32. and so to the north, ver. 35. for here is no gate either of the outer or inner court towards the *west*; it should seem that in Solomon's temple there were gates westward, for we find porters towards the west, 1 *Chron. ix. 24—xxvi. 8.* But Josephus saith, that in the second temple there was no gate on the west-side. Observe,

1. These gates into the inner court were exactly uniform with those into the outer court; the dimensions the same, the chambers adjoining the same, and the galleries or rows round the court the same. The very engraving on the posts the same. The work of grace, and its workings, are the same for substance in grown Christians that they are in young beginners, only that the former are got so much nearer their perfection. The faith of all the saints is alike *precious*, though it be not alike *strong*. There is a great resemblance between one child of God and another; for *all they are brethren*, and bear the same image.

2. The ascent into the outer court at each gate was by *seven steps*, but the ascent into the inner court at each gate was by *eight steps*. This is expressly taken notice of, ver. 31, 34, 37. to signify, that the nearer we *approach* to God, the more we should *rise* above this world, and the things of it. The people that worshipped in the outer court must rise *seven steps* above other people, but the priests that attended in the inner court, must rise *eight steps* above them; must exceed them at least one step more than they exceed other people.

39. ¶ And in the porch of the gate *were* two tables on this side, and two tables on that side, to lay thereon the burnt-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering. 40. And at the side without, as one goeth up to the entry of the north-gate, *were* two tables; and on the other side, which *was* at the porch of the gate, *were* two tables. 41. Four tables *were* on this side, and four tables on that side, by the side of the gate; eight tables, whereupon they *slew their sacrifices*. 42. And the four tables *were* of hewn stone for the burnt-offering, of a cubit and an half long, and a cubit and an half broad, and one cubit high: whereupon also they laid the instruments wherewith they *slew* the burnt-offering and the sacrifice. 43. And within *were* hooks, an hand broad, fastened round about; and upon the tables *was* the flesh of the offering. 44. ¶ And without the inner gate *were* the chambers of the fingers in the inner court, which *was* at the side of the north-gate: and their prospect *was* toward the south, one at the side of the east-gate, *having*

having the prospect toward the north. 45. And he said unto me, This chamber whose prospect is toward the south, is for the priests the keepers of the charge of the house. 46. And the chamber whose prospect is toward the north, is for the priests the keepers of the charge of the altar: these are the sons of Zadok among the sons of Levi, which come near to the LORD to minister unto him. 47. So he measured the court, an hundred cubits long, and an hundred cubits broad, four-square, and the altar that was before the house. 48. ¶ And he brought me to the porch of the house, and measured each post of the porch, five cubits on this side, and five cubits on that side: and the breadth of the gate was three cubits on this side, and three cubits on that side. 49. The length of the porch was twenty cubits, and the breadth eleven cubits, and he brought me by the steps whereby they went up to it: and there were pillars by the posts, one on this side, and another on that side.

In these verses we have an account,

1. Of the tables that were in the porch of the gates of the inner court. We find no description of the altars of burnt-offerings in the midst of that court, till chap. xliii. 13. But because the one altar under the law was to be exchanged for a multitude of tables under the gospel, here is early notice taken of the tables, at our entrance into the inner court; for till we come to partake of the table of the Lord, we are but professors at large; our admission to that is our entrance into the inner court. But in this gospel-temple we meet with no altar, till after the glory of the Lord has taken possession of it, for Christ is our altar, that sanctifies every gift. Here were eight tables provided whereon to lay the sacrifices, ver. 41. We read not of any tables for this purpose, either in the tabernacle, or in Solomon's temple. But here they are provided, to intimate the multitude of spiritual sacrifices that should be brought to God's house in gospel-times; and the multitude of hands that should be employed in offering up those sacrifices. Here were the shambles for the altar: Here were the dressers on which they laid the flesh of the sacrifice, the knives with which they cut it up, and the hooks on which they hung it up, that it might be ready to be offered on the altar, ver. 38. and there also they washed the burnt-offerings, ver. 38. To intimate, that before we draw near to God's altar, we must have every thing in readiness; must wash our hands, our hearts, those spiritual sacrifices, and so compass God's altar.

2. The use that some of the chambers mentioned before were put to. (1.) Some were for the singers, ver. 44. It should seem they were first provided for before any other that attended this temple-service, to intimate, not only that singing of psalms should still continue a gospel-ordinance, but that the gospel should furnish all that embrace it with abundant matter for joy and praise; and give them occasion to break forth into singing, which is often foretold concerning gospel-times, *Psal.* xcvi. 1.—xcviii. 1. Christians should be singers. *Blessed are they that dwell in God's house, they will be still praising him.* (2.) Others of them were for the priests; both those that kept the charge of the house, to cleanse it, and to see that none come into it to pollute it, and to keep it in good repair, ver. 45. and those that kept the charge of the altar, ver. 46. that came near to the Lord to minister to him. God will find convenient lodging for all his servants. Those that do the work of his house shall enjoy the comforts of it.

3. Of the inner court; the court of the priests, which was fifty yards square, ver. 47. The altar that was before the house was placed in the midst of this court, over-against the three gates, which standing in a direct line with the three gates of the outer court, when the gates were set open, all the people in the outer court might through them be spectators of the service done at the altar. Christ is both our altar and our sacrifice, to whom we must look with an eye of faith in all our approaches to God, and he is salvation in the midst of the earth, *Psal.* lxxiv. 12. to be looked unto from all quarters.

4. Of the porch of the house. The temple is called the house, emphatically, as if no other house were worthy to be called so. Before this house there was a porch, to teach us not to rush hastily and inconsiderately into the presence of God, but gradually, that is, gravely, and with solemnity, passing first through the outer court, then the inner, then the porch, ere we enter into the house. Between this porch and the altar was a place where the priests used to pray, *Joel* ii. 17. In the porch, besides the posts on which the doors were hung, there were pillars, probably for state and ornament, like Jachin and Boaz. *He will establish; in him is strength*, ver. 49. In the gospel church, every thing is strong and firm, and every thing ought to be kept in its place, and to be done decently and in order.

C H A P. XLI.

An account was given of the porch of the house, in the close of the foregoing chapter, this brings us to the temple itself; the description of which here given creates much difficulty to the critical expositors, and occasions differences among them. Those must consult them, who are nice in their enquiries into the meaning of the particulars of this delineation; it shall suffice us to observe, (1.) The dimensions of the house, the posts of it, ver. 1. the door, ver. 2. the wall and the side-chambers, ver. 5, 6. the foundations and wall of the chambers, and their doors, ver. 8—11. the house itself, ver. 13. (2.) The dimensions of the oracle, or most holy place, ver. 3, 4. (3.) An account of another building over against the separate place, ver. 12—15. (4.) The manner of the building of the house, ver. 7, 16, 17. (5.) The ornaments of the house, ver. 18—20. (6.) The altar of incense, and the table, ver. 22. (7.) The doors between the temple and the oracle, ver. 23, 26. There is so much difference both in the terms and in the rules of architecture between one age and another, one place and another, that it ought not to be any stumbling-block to us, that there is so much in these descriptions dark and hard to be understood, about the meaning of which the learned are not agreed. To one not skilled in mathematicks the mathematical description of a modern structure would be scarce intelligible; and yet to a common carpenter or mason among the Jews at that time, we may suppose all this in the literal sense of it was easy enough.

1. **A**fterward he brought me to the temple, and measured the posts, six cubits broad on the one side, and six cubits broad on the other side, which was the breadth of the tabernacle. 2. And the breadth of the door was ten cubits, and the sides of the door were five cubits on the one side, and five cubits on the other side: and he measured the length thereof forty cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits. 3. Then went he inward, and measured the post of the door two cubits, and the door six cubits, and the breadth of the door seven cubits. 4. So he measured the length thereof twenty cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits before the temple; and he said unto me, This is the most holy place. 5. After, he measured the wall of the house six cubits, and the breadth of every side-chamber four cubits round about the house on every side. 6. And the side-chambers were three, one over another, and thirty in order, and they entred into the wall which was of the house for the side-chambers round about, that they might have hold, but they had not hold in the wall of the house. 7. And there was an enlarging and a winding about still upward to the side-chambers, for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst. 8. I saw also the height of the house round about: the foundations of the side-chambers were a full reed of six great cubits. 9. The thickness of the wall which was for the side-chambers without, was five cubits, and that which was left, was the place of the side-chambers that were within. 10. And between the chambers was the wideness of twenty cubits round about the house on every side. 11. And the doors of the side-chambers were toward the place that was left, one door toward the north, and another door toward the south, and the breadth of the place that was left, was five cubits round about.

We are still attending a prophet that is under the conduct of an angel, and therefore attend with reverence, tho' we are often at a loss to know both what this is, and what it is to us. Observe here,

1. After the prophet had observed the courts, he was at length brought to the temple, ver. 1. If we diligently attend to the instructions given us in the plainer parts of religion, and profit by them, we shall be led further into an acquaintance with the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. They that are willing to dwell in God's courts shall at length be brought into his temple. Ezekiel was himself a priest, but by the iniquity and calamity of the times was cut short of his birthright privilege, of ministring

niftring in the temple; but God makes up the loss to him, by introducing him into this prophetic, evangelical, celestial temple, and imploving him to transmit a description of it to the church, in which he was dignified above all the rest of his order.

2. When our Lord Jesus spoke of the destroying of *this temple*, which his hearers understood of this second temple at Jerusalem, he spake of the temple of his body, *John* ii. 19, 21. and with good reason might he speak so ambiguously, when Ezekiel's vision had a joint respect to them both together, including also his mystical body the church, which is called the *house of God*, *1 Tim.* iii. 15. and all the members of that body, which are *living temples*, in whom the Spirit dwells.

3. The very *posts* of this temple, the door-posts were as far one from the other, and consequently the door was as wide as *the whole breadth of the tabernacle* of Moses, *ver.* 1. *viz.* twelve cubits, *Exod.* xxvi. 16, 22, 25. In comparison with what had been under the law, we may say that *wide is the gate* which leads into the church; the ceremonial law, that wall of partition which had so much straitened the gate, being taken down.

4. The most holy place was an exact square, twenty cubits each way, *ver.* 4. For the new Jerusalem is exactly four square, *Rev.* xxi. 16. noting its stability; for we look for a city that cannot be moved.

5. The upper stories were larger than the lower, *ver.* 7. The walls of the temple were six cubits thick at the bottom, five in the middle-story, and four in the highest, which gave room to enlarge the chambers the higher they went; but care was taken that the timber might have *fast hold*; tho' God builds *high* yet he builds *firm*; yet so as not to weaken one part for the strengthening another; they had hold, but not *in the wall of the house*. By this spreading gradually, the *side-chambers* that were on the *height of the house*, i. e. in the uppermost story of all, were six cubits; whereas the lowest were but *four*; they gained a cubit every story. The higher we build up our selves in our most holy faith, the more should our hearts, those living temples, be enlarged.

12. Now the building that *was* before the separate place, at the end toward the west, *was* seventy cubits broad, and the wall of the building *was* five cubits thick round about, and the length thereof ninety cubits. 13. So he measured the house, an hundred cubits long, and the separate place, and the building, with the walls thereof, an hundred cubits long. 14. Also the breadth of the face of the house, and of the separate place toward the east, an hundred cubits. 15. And he measured the length of the building over-against the separate place which *was* behind it, and the galleries thereof on the one side, and on the other side an hundred cubits with the inner temple, and the porches of the court. 16. The door-posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over-against the door cieled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows *were* covered. 17. To that above the door, even unto the inner house and without, and by all the wall round about within and without, by measure. 18. And *it was* made with cherubims and palm-trees, so that a palm-tree *was* between a cherub and a cherub, and every cherub had two faces: 19. So that the face of a man *was* toward the palm-tree on the one side, and the face of a young lion toward the palm-tree on the other side: *it was* made through all the house round about. 20. From the ground unto above the door *were* cherubims and palm-trees made, and on the wall of the temple. 21. The posts of the temple *were* squared, and the face of the sanctuary: the appearance of *the one* as the appearance of *the other*. 22. The altar of wood *was* three cubits high, and the length thereof two cubits; and the corners thereof, and the length thereof, and the walls thereof *were* of wood: and he said unto me, *This is* the table that *is* before the LORD. 23. And the temple and the sanctuary had two doors. 24. And the doors had two leaves *apiece*, two turning leaves; two leaves for the one door, and two leaves for the other door. 25. And *there were* made on them, on the doors of the temple, cherubims and palm-trees, like as *were* made upon the walls; and *there were* thick planks upon the face of the porch without. 26. And *there were* narrow windows and palm-trees on the one side, and on the other side, on the sides of the porch, and upon the side-chambers of the house, and thick planks.

Here is, 1. An account of a building that was before the separate place, i. e. before the temple, *at the end towards the west*, *ver.* 12. which is here measured, and compared, *ver.* 13. with the measure of the house, and appears to be of equal dimensions with it. This stood in a court by itself, which is measured, *ver.* 15. and its galleries, or chambers, belonging to it, its posts and windows, and the ornaments of them, *ver.* 15, 16, 17. But what use was to be made of this other building, we are not told; perhaps in this vision, it signified the setting up of a church among the Gentiles, not inferior to the Jewish temple, but of quite another nature, and which should soon *superfede* it.

2. A description of the ornaments of the temple, and the other building. The walls on the inside from top to bottom were adorned with *cherubims and palm-trees*, placed alternately; as in Solomon's temple, *1 Kin.* vi. 29. Each cherub is here said to have *two faces*; the *face of a man* towards the palm-tree on one side, and the *face of a young lion* towards the palm-tree on the other side, *ver.* 19. These seem to represent the angels that have more than the wisdom of a man, and the courage of a lion; and in both they have an eye to the *palms* of victory and triumph, which are set before them, and which they are sure of in all their conflicts with the powers of darkness. And in the assemblies of the saints, angels are in a special manner present, *1 Cor.* xi. 10.

3. A description of the posts of the doors, both of the temple, and of the sanctuary, they were *squared*, *ver.* 21. not round like pillars; and *the appearance of the one as the appearance of the other*. In the tabernacle, and in Solomon's temple, the door of the sanctuary, or most holy, was narrower than that of the temple; but here it was fully as broad; for in gospel times *the way into the holiest of all is made more manifest* than it had been under the old testament, *Heb.* ix. 8. and therefore the door wider. These doors are described, *ver.* 23, 24. The temple and the sanctuary had each of them their door, and they were *two-leaved*, folding doors.

4. We have here the description of the altar of incense, here said to be an *altar of wood*, *ver.* 22. No mention is made of its being *overlaid with gold*; but sure it was intended to be so, else it would not bear the fire with which the incense was to be burned; unless we will suppose that it served only to put the censers upon. Or else, it intimates that the incense to be offered in the gospel temple shall be purely spiritual, and the fire spiritual, which will not consume an altar of wood. Therefore this altar is called *a table*; *this is the table that is before the Lord*. Here, as before, we find the altar turned into a table; for the great sacrifice being now offered, that which we have to do is to feast upon the sacrifice at the Lord's table.

5. Here is the adorning of the doors and windows with palm-trees, that they might be of a piece with the walls of the house, *ver.* 25, 26. Thus the living temples are adorned, not with gold, or silver, or costly array, but with *the hidden man of the heart in that which is not corruptible*.

C H A P. XLII.

This chapter continues and concludes the describing and measuring of this mystical temple, which it is very hard to understand the particular architecture of, and yet more hard to comprehend the mystical meaning of. Here is, 1. A description of the chambers that were about the courts, their situation and structure, ver. 1—13. And the uses for which they were designed, ver. 13, 14. 2. A survey of the whole compass of ground, which was taken up with the house, and the courts belonging to it, ver. 15—20.

1. **T**HEN he brought me forth into the utter court, the way toward the north, and he brought me into the chamber that *was* over against the separate place, and which *was* before the building toward the north. 2. Before the length of an hundred cubits *was* the north-door, and the breadth *was* fifty cubits. 3. Over against the twenty cubits, which *were* for the inner court, and over against the pavement which *was* for the utter court, *was* gallery against gallery in three stories. 4. And before the chambers *was* a walk of ten cubits breadth inward, a way of one cubit, and their doors toward the north. 5. Now the upper chambers *were* shorter: for the galleries were higher than these, than the lower, and than the middlemost of the building. 6. For they *were* in three stories, but had not pillars

as the pillars of the courts : therefore *the building* was straitened more than the lowest, and the middlemost from the ground. 7. And the wall that *was* without over against the chambers, towards the utter court on the forepart of the chambers, the length thereof *was* fifty cubits. 8. For the length of the chambers that *were* in the utter court *was* fifty cubits : and 10, before the temple *were* an hundred cubits. 9. And from under these chambers *was* the entry on the east side, as one goeth into them from the utter court. 10. The chambers *were* in the thickness of the wall of the court toward the east, over against the separate place, and over against the building. 11. And the way before them *was* like the appearance of the chambers which *were* toward the north, as long as they, and as broad as they, and all their goings out *were* both according to their fashions, and according to their doors. 12. And according to the doors of the chambers that *were* toward the south, *was* a door in the head of the way, *even* the way directly before the wall toward the east, as one entred into them. 13. ¶ Then said he unto me, The north-chambers, and the south-chambers, which *are* before the separate place, they *be* holy chambers, where the priests that approach unto the LORD shall eat the most holy things : there shall they lay the most holy things, and the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering ; for the place *is* holy. 14. When the priests enter therein, then shall they not go out of the holy place into the utter court, but there they shall lay their garments, wherein they minister ; for they *are* holy : and shall put on other garments, and shall approach to *those things* which *are* for the people.

The prophet hath taken a very exact view of the temple, and the buildings belonging to it, and is now brought again into the outer court, to observe the chambers that were in that square.

1. Here is a description of these chambers ; which (as that which went before) seems to us very perplexed and intricate, through our unacquaintedness with the Hebrew language, and the rules of architecture at that time. We shall only observe in general,

1. That about the temple, which was the place of publick worship, there were private chambers, to teach us that our attendance upon God in solemn ordinances will not excuse us from the duties of the closet. We must not only worship in the courts of God's house, but must both before and after our attendance there, enter into our chambers, enter into our closets, and read, and meditate, and pray to our Father in secret ; and a great deal of comfort the people of God have found in their communion with God in solitude.

2. That these chambers were many ; there were three stories of them, and though the higher stories were not so large as the lower, yet they served as well for retirement, ver. 5, 6: There were many, that there might be conveniences for all such devout people as Anna the prophetess, who departed not from the temple night or day, Luke ii. 37. In my Father's house are many mansions, in his house on earth there are so ; multitudes by faith have taken lodgings in his sanctuary, and yet there is room.

3. That these chambers, though they were private, yet were near the temple, within view of it, within reach of it, to teach us to prefer publick worship before private : The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, and so must we. And to refer our private worship to the publick ; our religious performances in our chambers must be to prepare us for the exercises of devotion in publick, and to further us in our improvement of them, as our opportunities are.

4. That before these chambers there were walks of five yards broad, ver. 4. in which those that had lodgings in these chambers might meet for conversation, might walk and talk together for their mutual edification, might communicate their knowledge, and experiences. For we are not to spend all our time between the church and the chamber, though a great deal of time may be spent to very good purpose in both ; but man is made for society, and christians for the communion of saints ; and the duties of that communion we must make conscience of, and the privileges and pleasures of that communion we must take the comfort of. It is promised to Joshua, who was high priest in the second temple, that God will give him places to walk in among them that stand by, Zech. iii. 7.

2. Here is the use of these chambers appointed, ver. 13, 14.

1. They were for the priests, that approach unto the Lord, that they may be always near their business, and may not be non-residents : therefore they are called holy chambers, because they

were for the use of them that ministered in holy things, during their ministration. Those that have publick work to do for God, and the souls of men, have need to be much in private, to fit themselves for it. Ministers should spend much time in their chambers, in reading, meditation, and prayer, that their profiting may appear ; and they ought to be provided with conveniences for this purpose.

2. There the priests were to deposit the most holy things, i. e. those parts of the offerings which fell to their share, and there they were to eat them, they and their families, in a religious manner ; for the place is holy ; and thus they must make a difference between those feasts upon the sacrifice and other meals.

3. There (among other uses) they were to lay their vestments, which God had appointed them to wear when they ministered at the altar ; their linen ephods, coats, girdles, and bonnets. We read of the providing of priests garments after their return out of captivity, Neh. vii. 70, 72. When they had ended their service at the altar, they must lay by those garments, to signify that the use of them should continue only during that dispensation ; but they must put on other garments, such as other people wear, when they approached to those things which were for the people, i. e. to do that part of their service which related to the people, to teach them the law, and to answer their enquiries. Their holy garments must be laid up, that they may be kept clean and decent for the credit of their service.

15. Now when he had made an end of measuring the inner house, he brought me forth toward the gate whose prospect is toward the east, and measured it round about. 16. He measured the east side with the measuring-reed, five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 17. He measured the north-side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed round about. 18. He measured the south-side five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 19. ¶ He turned about to the west-side, and measured five hundred reeds, with the measuring-reed. 20. He measured it by the four sides : it had a wall round about, five hundred reeds long, and five hundred broad, to make a separation between the sanctuary and the profane place.

We have attended the measuring of this mystical temple, and are now to see how far the holy ground on which we tread doth extend, and that also is here measured, and found to take in a great compass. Observe,

1. What the dimensions of it were. It extended each way five hundred reeds, ver. 16, 17, 18, 19. each reed above three yards and a half, so that it reached every way about an English measured mile, which, the ground lying square, was above eight miles round. Thus large were the suburbs (as I may call them) of this mystical temple ; signifying the great extent of the church in gospel times, when all nations should be disciplined, and the kingdoms of the world made Christ's kingdoms. Room should be made in God's courts for the numerous forces of the Gentiles, that shall flow into them, as was foretold, Isa. xlix. 18. —ix. 4. It is in part fulfilled already in the accession of the Gentiles to the church ; and we trust it shall have a more full accomplishment, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved.

2. Why the dimensions of it were made thus large : It was to make a separation, by putting a very large distance between the sanctuary, and the profane place ; and therefore there was a wall surrounding it, to keep off those that were unclean, and to separate between the precious and the vile. Note, A difference is to be put between common and sacred things ; between God's name and other names, between his day and other days, his book and other books, his institutions and other observances ; and a distance to be put between our worldly and religious actions, so as still to go about the worship of God with a solemn pause.

C H A P. XLIII.

The prophet having given us a view of the mystical temple, the gospel church, as he received it from the Lord, that it might appear not to be erected in vain, comes to describe in this and the next chapter, the worship that should be performed in it, but under the type of the Old Testament services. In this chapter we have, (1.) Possession taken of this temple, by the glory of God filling it, ver. 1—6. (2.) A promise given of the continuance of God's presence with his people, upon condition of their return to and continuance in the instituted way of his worship, and their

their abandoning of idols, and idolatry, ver. 7—12. (3.) A description of the altar of burnt-offerings, ver. 13—17. (4.) Directions given for the consecration of that altar, ver. 18—27. And Ezekiel seems here to stand between God and Israel, as Moses, the servant of the Lord, did, when the sanctuary was first set up.

1. **A**fterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east. 2. And behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters, and the earth shined with his glory. 3. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw, when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar: and I fell upon my face. 4. And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate, whose prospect is toward the east. 5. So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house. 6. And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house, and the man stood by me.

After Ezekiel had patiently surveyed the temple of God, the greatest glory of this earth, he is admitted into a higher form, and honoured with a sight of the glories of the upper world; it is said to him, *Come up hither*. He hath seen the temple, and sees it to be very spacious and splendid; but till the glory of God comes into it, it is but like the dead bodies he had seen in vision, chap. xxxvii. that had no breath, till the Spirit of life entered into them. Here therefore he sees the house filled with God's glory.

1. He has a vision of the glory of God, ver. 2. The glory of the God of Israel, that God who is in covenant with Israel, and whom they serve and worship. The idols of the heathen have no glory, but what they owe to the goldsmith or the painter; but this is the glory of the God of Israel. This glory came from the way of the east, and therefore he was brought to the gate that leads towards the east, to expect the appearance and approach of it. Christ's star was seen in the east, and he is that other angel that ascendeth out of the east, Rev. vii. 2. For he is the morning-star, he is the sun of righteousness. Two things he observed in this appearance of the glory of God. (1.) The power of his word which he heard. His voice was like a noise of many waters, which is heard very far, and makes impressions; the noise of purling streams is grateful, of a roaring sea dreadful, Rev. i. 15.—xiv. 2. Christ's gospel, in the glory of which he shines, was to be proclaimed aloud, the report of it to be heard far; to some it is a favour of life, to others of death, according as they are. (2.) The brightness of his appearance which he saw. The earth shined with his glory; for God is light, and none can bear the lustre of his light, none hath seen or can see it. Note, That glory of God which shines in the church, shines on the world. When God appeared for David, the brightness that was before him dispersed the clouds, Psal. xviii. 12.

This appearance of the glory of God to Ezekiel here, he observed to be the same with the vision he saw, when he first received his commission, chap. i. 4. according to that by the river Chebar, ver. 3. because God is the same, he was pleased to manifest himself in the same manner, for with him is no variableness. It was the same (saith he) with that which I saw when I came to destroy the city, i. e. to foretel the city's destruction; which he did with such authority and efficacy, and the event did so certainly answer the prediction, that he might be said to destroy it. As a judge, in God's name, he passed a sentence upon it, which was soon executed. God appeared in the same manner, when he sent him to speak words of terror, and when he sent him to speak words of comfort; for in both God is and will be glorified. He kills and he makes alive; he wounds and he heals, Deut. xxxii. 39. To the same hand that destroyed we must look for deliverance; he hath smitten, and he will bind up. Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit.

2. He has a vision of the entrance of this glory into the temple. When he saw this glory, he fell upon his face, ver. 3. as not able to bear the lustre of God's glory, or rather as one willing to give him the glory of it by an humble and reverent adoration. But the Spirit took him up, ver. 5. when the glory of the Lord was come into the house, ver. 4. that he might see how the house was filled with it. He saw how the glory of the Lord in this same appearance departed from the temple, because it was profaned, to his great grief; now he shall see it return to the temple to his great satisfaction. See chap. x. 18, 19.—xi. 23. Note, Though God may forsake his people for a small moment, he will return with everlasting loving-kindness. God's glory filled the house as it had filled the tabernacle which Moses set up, and the temple of Solomon, Exod. xl. 34. 1 Kin. viii. 10. Now we do not find that ever the Schechinah did in that manner take possession of the second temple, and therefore this was to have

its accomplishment in that glory of the divine grace which shines so bright in the gospel church, and fills it. Here is no mention of a cloud filling the house as formerly, for we now with open face behold the glory of the Lord, in the face of Christ, and not as of old through the cloud of types.

3. He receives instructions more immediately from the glory of the Lord; as Moses did when God had taken possession of the tabernacle, Lev. i. 1. I heard him speaking to me out of the house, ver. 6. God's glory shining in the church, we must from thence expect to receive divine oracles. The man stood by me; we could not bear to hear the voice of God any more than to see the face of God, if Jesus Christ did not stand by us as mediator. Or if this was a created angel, it is observable that when God began to speak to Ezekiel, he stood by, and gave way; having no more to say. Nay, he stood by the prophet, as a learner with him; for to the principalities and powers, to the angels themselves, who desire to look into these things, is known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, Eph. iii. 10. The man stood by him to conduct him thither where he might receive further discoveries, chap. xlv. 1.

7. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings, by their whoredom, nor by the carcases of their kings in their high places. 8. In their setting of their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, and the wall between me and them, they have even defiled my holy name by their abominations that they have committed: wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom, and the carcases of their kings far from me, and I will dwell in the midst of them for ever. 10. ¶ Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities, and let them measure the pattern. 11. And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them. 12. This is the law of the house; upon the top of the mountain, the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy: behold, this is the law of the house.

God doth here in effect renew his covenant with his people Israel upon his re-taking possession of the house, and Ezekiel negotiates the matter, as Moses formerly. This would be of great use to the captives at their return, both for direction and encouragement. But look further to those that are blessed with the privileges of the gospel-temple, that they may understand how they are before him on their good behaviour.

1. God, by the prophet, puts them in mind of their former provocations, for which they had long lain under the tokens of his displeasure. This conviction is spoken to them, to make way for the comforts designed them. Though God gives and upbraids not, it becomes us, when he forgives, to upbraid our selves with our unworthy carriage towards him. Let them now remember therefore,

(1.) That they had formerly defiled God's holy name, had profaned and abused all those sacred things by which he had made himself known among them, ver. 7. They and their kings had brought contempt on the religion they professed, and their relation to God, by their spiritual whoredom, their idolatry, and by worshipping images, which they called their kings, for so Moloch signifies; or lords, for so Baal signifies; but were really the carcases of kings, not only lifeless and useless, but loathsome and abominable as dead carcases, in their high places, set up in honour of them. They had defiled God's name by their abominations. And what were they? It was in setting their threshold by my thresholds, and their post by my posts, i. e. adding their own inventions to God's institutions, and urging all to a compliance with them, as if they had been of equal authority and efficacy; teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, Isa. xxix. 13. Or rather, setting up altars to their idols even in the courts of the temple, than which a more impudent affront could not be put upon the Divine Majesty. Thus they set up a separation-wall between him and them, which stopped the current of his favours to them, and spoiled the acceptableness of their services to him. See what an indignity sinners do to God, setting up their walls in opposition to his, and thrusting him out from what is his right; and

and see what injury they do to themselves; for the nearer any come to God with their sins, the further they set him at a distance from them. Some give this sense of it; though their houses joined close to God's house, their posts and thresholds to his, so that they were in a manner his next neighbours, *there was but a wall between me and them*, (so it is in the margin) so that it might have been expected they should have acquainted themselves with him, and been in care to please him, yet they were not so much as neighbourly. Note, It often proves too true, *The nearer the church, the further from God*. They were by profession in covenant with God, and yet they had defiled the place of his throne, and of the soles of his feet, i. e. his temple, where he did both reside and reign. Jerusalem is called the city of the great king, Psal. xlviii. 2. and his footstool, Psal. xcix. 5.—cxviii. 7. Note, When God's ordinances are profaned, his holy name is polluted.

(2.) That for this God had had a controversy with them, in their late troubles. They could not condemn him, for he had but brought upon them the desert of their sins; *wherefore I have consumed them in mine anger*. Note, Those that pollute God's holy name, fall under his just displeasure.

2. He calls upon them to repent and reform, and in order to that to be ashamed of their iniquities, *ver. 9. Now let them put away their whoredom*, now they have smarted so severely for it, and now God is returning in mercy to them, and setting up his sanctuary again in the midst of them, now let them cast away their idols, and have no more to do with them, that they may not again forfeit the privileges which they have been taught to know the worth of by the want of. Let them put away their idols, those loathsome *carcasses of their kings, far from me*; from being a provocation to me. This was reasonable counsel now the prophet had the platform of the temple to set before them; for, (1.) If they see that platform they will surely be ashamed of their sins, *ver. 10.* when they see what mercy God has in store for them, notwithstanding their utter unworthiness of it, they will be ashamed to think of their disingenuous carriage towards him. Note, The goodness of God to us should lead us to repentance, especially to a penitential shame. Let them measure the pattern themselves, and see how much it exceeds the former pattern, and guess by that what great things God has in store for them, and surely it will put them out of countenance to think what the desert of their sins was. And then, (2.) If they be ashamed of their sins they shall surely see more of the platform, *ver. 11.* If they be ashamed of all that they have done, upon a general view of the goodness of God, let them have a more distinct particular account of it. Note, Those that improve what they see and know of the goodness of God, shall see and know more of it. And then, and not till then, we are qualified for God's favours, when we are truly humbled for our own follies. *Shew them the form of the house*, let them see what a stately structure it will be, and withal shew them the ordinances and laws of it. Note, With the fore-sights of our comforts, it is fit we should get the knowledge of our duty; with the privileges of God's house we must acquaint our selves with the rules of it. *Shew them these ordinances that they may keep them and do them*. Note, Therefore we are made to know our duty, that we may do it, and be blessed in our deed.

3. He promiseth that they shall be such as they should be, and then he will be to them such as they would have him to be, *ver. 7.* (1.) The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name. This is pure gospel. The precept of the law saith, you must not defile my name; the grace of the gospel saith you shall not. Thus what is required in the covenant is promised in the covenant, *Jer. xxxii. 40.* (2.) Then I will dwell in the midst of them for ever; and the same again, *ver. 9.* God secures to us his good-will by confirming in us his good work. If we do not defile his name, we may be sure he will not depart from us.

4. The general law of God's house is laid down, *ver. 12.* That whereas formerly only the chancel or sanctuary was most holy, now the whole mountain of the house shall be so. The whole limit thereof, including all the courts and all the chambers, shall be as the most holy place; signifying, that in gospel times, (1.) The whole church shall have the privilege of the holiness of holies, that of a near access to God. All believers have now under the gospel boldness to enter into the holiest, *Heb. x. 19.* with this advantage, that whereas the high-priest entred in the virtue of the blood of bulls and goats, we enter in the virtue of the blood of Jesus, and wherever we are we have through him access to the Father. (2.) The whole church shall be under a mighty obligation to press towards the perfection of holiness, as he which hath called us is holy. All must now be most holy. Holiness becomes God's house for ever, and in gospel times more than ever. Behold this is the law of the house, let none expect the protection of it that will not submit to this law.

13. ¶ And these are the measures of the altar after the cubit; the cubit is a cubit and an hand-breath; even the bottom shall be a cubit, and the breadth a cubit, and the border thereof by the edge thereof round about shall be a span, and this shall be the higher place of

the altar. 14. And from the bottom upon the ground, even to the lower settle, shall be two cubits, and the breadth one cubit; and from the lesser settle, even to the greater settle, shall be four cubits, and the breadth one cubit. 15. So the altar shall be four cubits, and from the altar and upward shall be four horns. 16. And the altar shall be twelve cubits long, twelve broad, square in the four squares thereof. 17. And the settle shall be fourteen cubits long, and fourteen broad in the four squares thereof, and the border about it shall be a cubit, and the bottom thereof shall be a cubit about, and his stairs shall look toward the east. 18. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, Thus saith the Lord G O D, These are the ordinances of the altar, in the day when they shall make it, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, and to sprinkle blood thereon. 19. And thou shalt give to the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok which approach unto me, to minister unto me, saith the Lord G O D, a young bullock for a sin-offering. 20. And thou shalt take of the blood thereof, and put it on the four horns of it, and on the four corners of the settle, and upon the border round about: thus shalt thou cleanse and purge it. 21. Thou shalt take the bullock also of the sin-offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place of the house without the sanctuary. 22. And on the second day thou shalt offer a kid of the goats without blemish for a sin-offering, and they shall cleanse the altar, as they did cleanse it with the bullock. 23. When thou hast made an end of cleansing it, thou shalt offer a young bullock without blemish, and a ram out of the flock, without blemish. 24. And thou shalt offer them before the L O R D, and the priests shall cast salt upon them, and they shall offer them up for a burnt-offering unto the L O R D. 25. Seven days shalt thou prepare every day a goat for a sin-offering: they shall also prepare a young bullock, and a ram out of the flock without blemish. 26. Seven days shall they purge the altar and purify it, and they shall consecrate themselves. 27. And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and so forward, the priests shall make your burnt-offerings upon the altar, and your peace-offerings; and I will accept you, saith the Lord G O D.

This is concerning the altar in this mystical temple, and that is mystical too; for Christ is our altar. The Jews after their return out of captivity, had an altar long before they had a temple, *Ezra iii. 3.* But this was an altar in the temple. Now here we have,

1. The measures of the altar, *ver. 13.* It was six yards square at the top, and seven yards square at the bottom; it was four yards and a half high; it had a lower bench or shelf, here called a settle, a yard from the ground, on which some of the priests stood to minister, and another two yards above that, on which others of them stood, and these were each of them half a yard broad, and had ledges on either side that they might stand firm upon them. The sacrifices were killed at the table spoken of before, *chap. xl. 39.* What was to be burnt on the altar was given up to those on the lower bench, and handed by them to those on the higher, and they laid it on the altar. Thus in the service of God we must be assistant to one another.

2. The ordinances of the altar. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning the dedication of the altar at first; seven days were to be spent in the dedication of it, and every day sacrifices were to be offered upon it, and particularly a goat for a sin-offering, *ver. 25.* besides a young bullock for a sin-offering on the first day, *ver. 19.* which teacheth us in all our religious services to have an eye to Christ the great sin-offering. Neither our persons nor our performances can be acceptable to God, unless sin be taken away, and that cannot be taken away but by the blood of Christ, which both sanctifies the altar, (for Christ entred by his own blood, *Heb. ix. 12.*) and the gift upon the altar. There was also to be a bullock and a ram offered for a burnt-offering, *ver. 24.* which was intended purely for the glory of God, to teach us to have an eye to that in all our services; we present our selves as living sacrifices, and our devotions as spiritual sacrifices, that we and they may be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory.

The dedication of the altar is here called the cleansing and purging of it, *ver. 20, 26.* Christ is our altar tho' he had no pollution to be cleansed from, yet sanctified himself, *John xvii. 19.* and when we consecrate the altars of our hearts to God, to have the fire of holy love always burning upon them, we must see that

that they be *purified and cleansed* from the love of the world, and the lusts of the flesh. It is observable, that there are several differences between the rites of dedication here, and those which were appointed, *Exod. xxix.* to intimate, that the ceremonial institutions were mutable things, and the changes in them were earnest of their period in Christ. Only here according to the general law that all the sacrifices must be seasoned with salt, *Lev. ii. 14.* particular orders are given, *ver. 24.* that the priests shall *cast salt upon the sacrifices.* Grace is the salt, with which all our religious performances must be seasoned, *Col. iv. 6.* An everlasting covenant is called a *covenant of salt*, because it is *incorruptible.* The glory reserved for us is *incorruptible* and undefiled; and the grace wrought in us is the hidden man of the heart in that *which is not corruptible.*

2. Concerning the constant use that should be made of it, when it was dedicated; from *henceforward* the priests shall *make their burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon this altar*, *ver. 27.* for therefore it was *sanctified* that it might *sanctify the gift* that was offered upon it.

Observe further, (1.) Who were to serve at the altar, the *priests of the seed of Zadok*, *ver. 19.* That family was substituted in the room of Abiathar by Solomon, and God confirms it. His name signifies *righteous*, for they are the righteous seed that are priests to God, through Christ *the Lord our righteousness.* (2.) How they should prepare for this service, *ver. 26.* *they shall consecrate themselves; shall fill their hand with the offerings; in token of the giving up of themselves with their offerings to God and to his service.* Note, Before we minister to the Lord in holy things, we must consecrate our selves by getting our hands and hearts filled with those things. (3.) How they should speed in it, *ver. 27.* *I will accept you.* And if God now accept our works, if our services be pleasing to him, it is enough, we need no more. Those that give themselves to God shall be accepted of God, their persons first, and then their performances through the Mediator.

C H A P. XLIV.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The appropriating of the east gate of the temple to the prince, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) A reproof sent to the house of Israel for their former profanations of God's sanctuary, with a charge to them to be more strict for the future, *ver. 4—9.* (3.) The degrading of those Levites that had formerly been guilty of idolatry, and the establishing of the priesthood in the family of Zadok which had kept their integrity, *ver. 10—16.* (4.) Divers laws and ordinances concerning the priests, *ver. 17—31.*

1. **T**HEN he brought me back the way of the gate of the outward sanctuary which looketh toward the east, and it was shut. 2. Then said the LORD unto me, This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the LORD the God of Israel hath entered in by it, therefore it shall be shut. 3. It is for the prince; the prince, he shall sit in it to eat bread before the LORD; he shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, and shall go out by the way of the same.

The prophet is here brought to review what he had before once surveyed; for tho' we have often looked into the things of God, they will yet bear to be looked over again, such a *copiousness* there is in them. The lessons we have learned we should still repeat to our selves. Every time we review the sacred fabric of holy things, which we have in the scriptures, we shall still find something new which we did not before take notice of. The prophet is brought a third time to the east-gate and finds it shut; which intimates that the rest of the gates were open at all times to the worshippers. But such an account is given of this gate's being shut as puts honour,

(1.) Upon the God of Israel. It is for the honour of him that the gate of the inner court at which his glory entered, when he took possession of the house, was ever after kept shut, and no man was allowed to enter in by it, *ver. 2.* The difference ever after made between this and the other gates, that this was shut when the other were open, was intended both to perpetuate the remembrance of the solemn entrance of the glory of the Lord into the house, which it would remain a traditional evidence of the truth of; and also to possess the minds of people with a reverence for the Divine Majesty, and with very awful thoughts of his transcendent glory; which was designed in God's charge to Moses at the bush, *put off thy shoe from off thy foot.* God will have a way by himself.

(2.) Upon the prince of Israel, *ver. 2.* It an honour to him, that tho' he may not enter in by this gate, for no man may; Yet (1.) He shall sit in this gate to eat his share of the peace-offerings, that sacred food, *before the Lord.* (2.) He shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate, by some little door or wicket, either in the gate, or adjoining to it, which is called the way of the porch. This was to signify, that God puts some of his glory upon magistrates, upon the princes of his people, for he hath said, *ye are gods.* Some by the prince here understand the high-priest, or the sagan, or second priest; and that he only was allowed to enter by this gate, for he was God's representative. Christ is the high-priest of our profession, who entered himself into the holy place, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

4. ¶ Then brought he me the way of the north-gate before the house; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD; and I fell upon my face. 5. And the LORD said unto me, Son of man, mark well, and behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee concerning all the ordinances of the house of the LORD, and all the laws thereof, and mark well the entering in of the house, with every going forth of the sanctuary. 6. And thou shalt say to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations, 7. In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in the sanctuary to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant, because of all your abominations. 8. And ye have not kept the charge of mine holy things: but ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for your selves. 9. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, No stranger uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel.

This is much to the same purpose with what we had in the beginning of chap. xliii. as the prophet must look again upon what he had before seen, so he must be told again what he had before heard. Here, as before, he sees the house filled with the glory of the Lord, which strikes an awe upon him, so that he falls prostrate at the sight, the humblest posture of adoration, and the expression of a holy awe. *I fell upon my face*, *ver. 4.* Note, the more we see of the glory of God, the more low we shall lie in our own eyes. Now here,

1. God chargeth the prophet to take a very particular notice of all he saw, and all that was said to him, *ver. 5.* Mark well, set thine heart, apply thy mind to the discoveries now made thee. (1.) Behold with thine eyes what is shewed thee, particularly the entering in of the house, and every going forth of it, all the inlets, and all the outlets of the sanctuary; those he must take special notice of. Note, In acquainting our selves with divine things, we must not aim so much at an abstract speculation of the things themselves, as at finding the plain appointed way of converse and communion with those things, that we may go in and out and find pasture. (2.) Hear with thine ears all that I say unto thee, about the laws and ordinances of the house, which he was to instruct the people in. Note, Those who are appointed to be teachers have need to be very diligent, careful learners, that they may neither forget any of the things they are entrusted with, nor mistake concerning them.

2. He sends him upon an errand to the people, to the rebellious, even to the house of Israel, *ver. 6.* It is sad to think that the house of Israel should deserve this character from him who perfectly knew them; that a people in covenant with God should be rebellious against him. Who are his subjects if the house of Israel be rebels! But it is an instance of God's rich mercy, that tho' they had been rebellious, yet being the house of Israel he doth not cast them off, but sends an ambassador to them to invite and encourage them to return to their allegiance, which he would not have done if he had been pleased to kill them. The whole race of mankind is fallen under the character here given of the house of Israel, but our Lord Jesus when he ascended on high received gifts for men, yea even for the rebellious also; that, as here, the Lord God might dwell among them, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.*

1. He must tell them of their faults; must shew them their rebellions, must shew the house of Jacob their sins. Note, Those that are sent to comfort God's people must first convince them, and so prepare them for comfort; Let it suffice you of all your abominations, *ver. 6.* Note, It is time for those that have continued long in sin to reckon it long enough, and too long, and to begin to think of taking up in time, and leaving off their evil courses. Let the time past of your lives suffice, for by this time

fore you have surfeited upon your abominations, and are become sick of them, 1 Pet. iv. 3.

That which is here charged upon them is,
(1.) That they had admitted those to the privileges of the sanctuary that were not entitled to them; whereas God had said, *The stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death*, they had not only connived at the intrusion of strangers into the sanctuary, but had themselves introduced them, ver. 7. *you brought in strangers uncircumcised in flesh*, and therefore under a legal incapacity to enter into the sanctuary, which was a *breaking off the covenant* of circumcision, throwing down the hedge their peculiarity, and laying themselves in common with the rest of the world. Yet if these strangers had been devout and good, tho' they were not circumcised, the crime had not been so great; but they were *uncircumcised in heart* too, unhumiliated, unreformed, and strangers indeed to God and all goodness. When they came to offer sacrifice they brought these with them to feast with them upon the sacrifice, because they were fond of their company, and this was one of their abominations, wherewith they polluted God's sanctuary; it was *giving that which was holy unto dogs*, Mat. vii. 6. Note, The admission of those who are openly wicked and profane to special ordinances is a polluting of God's sanctuary, and a great provocation to him.

(2.) That they had employed those in the service of the sanctuary who were not fit for it. Tho' none but priests and Levites were to minister in the sanctuary, yet we may suppose that all that were priests and Levites did not immediately attend there, but chosen men of them who were best qualified, that were most wise and serious, and conscientious, and most likely to keep the charge of the holy things carefully: but in making this choice they had not regard to merit, and qualification for the work, but *ye have set keepers of my charge in my sanctuary for your selves*, such as you had some favour or affection for, such as you either had got or hoped to get money by, or such as would comply with your humours, and would dispense with the laws of the sanctuary to please you. *Thus you have not kept the charge of my holy things*. Note, Those who have the choice of the keepers of the holy things, if to serve some secular selfish purpose they chuse such as are unfit and unfaithful, will justly have it laid at their door, that they have betrayed the holy things by lodging them in ill hands.

2. He must tell them *their duty*, ver. 9. *No stranger shall enter into my sanctuary* till he has first submitted to the laws of it. But lest any should think this excluded the penitent believing Gentiles from the church, the stranger here is described to be one that is *uncircumcised in heart*, not in sincerity consenting to the covenant, nor putting away the filth of the flesh; whereas the believing Gentiles were *circumcised with the circumcision made without hands*, Col. ii. 11. This circumcision of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter, was what the unbelieving Jews were strangers to, and unconcerned about, while yet they were zealous to keep out of the sanctuary uncircumcised Gentiles, witness their rage against Paul when they did but suspect him to have brought Greeks into the temple, Acts xxi. 28.

10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols, they shall even bear their iniquity. 11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt-offering, and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them: 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lift up mine hand against them, saith the Lord GOD, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed. 14. But I will make them keepers of the charge of the house for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein. 15. ¶ But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary, when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD. 16. They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me, and they shall keep my charge.

The master of the house being to set up house again, takes account of his servants the priests, and sees who are fit to be
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turned out of their places, and who to be kept in, and takes a course with them accordingly.

1. Those who had been *treacherous* are degraded and put lower. Those Levites or priests that were carried down the stream of the apostasy of Israel, formerly that *went astray from God after their idols*, ver. 10. that had complied with the idolatrous kings of Israel or Judah, that *ministered to them before their idols*, ver. 12. bowed with them in the house of Rimmon, or set up altars for them, as Uriah did for Ahaz; and so *caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity*, led them to sin, and hardened them in sin; for if the priests, go astray many will follow *their pernicious ways*. Perhaps in Babylon some of the Jewish priests had complied with the idolaters of the place, to the great scandal of their religion. Now these priests who had thus prevaricated, were justly put under the marks of God's displeasure; or if they were dead (as it is likely they were, if the crime were committed before the captivity) the iniquity was visited upon their children. Or perhaps it was the whole family of Abiathar that had been guilty of this trespass, which was now called to account for it. And,

(1.) They are sentenced to be deprived in part of their office, and from the dignity of priests are put down into the condition of ordinary Levites. God hath *lift up his hand against them*, hath said it, and sworn it, that *they shall bear their iniquity*, ver. 12. assuredly they shall suffer for it, shall suffer disgrace for it; *they shall bear their shame*, ver. 13. for tho' they have (we charitably hope) repented of it, *yet they shall not come near to do the office of a priest*, i. e. those parts of the office that were peculiar to them, they shall not come near to any of the holy things within the sanctuary, ver. 13. Note, Those who have robbed God of his honour, will justly be deprived of their honour. And it is really a great punishment to be forbidden to come near to God; and justly might they who have once gone away from him be rejected as unworthy ever to come near to him, and put at an everlasting distance.

(2.) Yet there is a mixture of mercy in this sentence; God deals not in severity, as he might have done, with those who had dealt treacherously with him, but mitigates the sentence, ver. 11, 14. They are deprived but in part, *ab officio*, and it should seem not at all *à beneficio*. They shall help to *slay the sacrifice*, which the Levites were permitted to do, and which in this temple was done, not at the altar but at the tables, chap. xl. 39. They shall be porters at the gates of the house, and they shall be keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof. Note, Those who may not be fit to be employed in one kind of service, may yet be fit to be employed in another: and even those that have offended may yet be made use of, and not quite thrown aside, much less thrown away.

2. Those who had been faithful are honoured and established, ver. 15, 16. These are remarkably distinguished from the other; *but the sons of Zadok*, that kept their integrity in a time of general apostasy, that *went not astray* when others did, *they shall come near to me, shall come near to my table*. Note, God will put marks of honour upon those that give proofs of their fidelity and constancy to him in shaking, trying times, and will employ those in his service who have kept close to his service, when others deserted it and drew back. And it ought to be reckoned a true and great reward of stability in duty to be established in it. If we keep close to God, God will keep us close to him.

17. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that when they enter in at the gates of the inner court, they shall be clothed with linen garments, and no wooll shall come upon them, whilst they minister in the gates of the inner court, and within. 18. They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins: they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat. 19. And when they go forth into the utter court, even into the utter court to the people, they shall put off their garments wherein they ministered, and lay them in the holy chambers, and they shall put on other garments, and they shall not sanctify the people with their garments. 20. Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long, they shall only poll their heads. 21. Neither shall any priest drink wine, when they enter into the inner court. 22. Neither shall they take for their wives a widow, or her that is put away: but they shall take maidens of the seed of the house of Israel, or a widow that had a priest before. 23. And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. 24. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment, and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes, in all mine assemblies,

blies, and they shall hallow my sabbaths. 25. And they shall come at no dead person to defile themselves: but for father, or for mother, or for son, or for daughter, for brother, or for sister, that hath had no husband, they may defile themselves. 26. And after he is cleansed, they shall reckon unto him seven days. 27. And in the day that he goeth into the sanctuary unto the inner court to minister in the sanctuary, he shall offer his sin-offering, saith the Lord GOD. 28. And it shall be unto them for an inheritance; I am their inheritance: and ye shall give them no possession in Israel; I am their possession. 29. They shall eat the meat-offering, and the sin-offering, and the trespass-offering; and every dedicate thing in Israel shall be theirs. 30. And the first of all the first-fruits of all things, and every oblation of all of every sort of your oblations shall be the priests: ye shall also give unto the priests the first of your dough, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house. 31. The priests shall not eat of any thing that is dead of itself, or torn, whether it be fowl or beast.

God's priests must be *regulars*, not *seculars*, and therefore here are rules laid down for them to govern themselves by, and due encouragement given them to live up to those rules. Directions are here given,

1. Concerning their clothes. They must wear *linen garments*, when they went in to minister, or do any service in the inner court or in the sanctuary, and nothing that was *woollen*, because it would cause sweat, ver. 17, 18. They must dress themselves *cool*, that they might go the more readily about their work; and they had the more need to do so, because they were to attend the altars, which had constant fires upon them. And they must dress themselves *clean and sweet*, and avoid every thing that was *sweaty and filthy*, to signify the purity of mind with which the service of God is to be attended to: Sweat came in with sin, and was a part of the curse, *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread*; clothes came in with sin, coats of skins did, and therefore the priests must use as *little and as light* clothing as possible, and not such as caused sweat. When they had finished their service they must change their clothes again, and lay up their linen garments in the chambers appointed for that purpose, ver. 19. as before, chap. xlii. 14. They must not go among the people with their holy garments on, lest they should imagine themselves sanctified by the touch of them; or, *they shall sanctify the people*, i. e. as it is explained, chap. xlii. 14. they shall approach to those things which are for the people, in their ordinary garments.

2. Concerning their hair, in that they must avoid extremes on both hands, ver. 20. They must not shave their heads in imitation of the Gentile priests, and as the priests of the Romish church do; nor, on the other hand, must they suffer their locks to grow long, as the *beaus*, or that they might be thought Nazarites, when really they were not; but they must be grave and modest, must poll their heads, and keep their hair short; if a man, especially a minister, wear long hair, it is not becoming, 1 Cor. xi. 14. it is effeminate.

3. Concerning their diet, they must be sure to drink no wine, when they went in to minister, lest they should drink to excess, should drink and forget the law, ver. 21. It is not for kings to drink wine, more than will do them good, much less for priests. See Lev. x. 9. Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

4. Concerning their marriages, ver. 22. Here they must consult the credit of their office, and not marry one that had been divorced, that was at least under the suspicion of immorality, nor a widow, unless she were a priest's widow, that had been accustomed to the usages of the priests families. Others may do that which ministers may not do, but must deny themselves in, in honour of their character. Their wives as well as themselves must be of good report.

5. Concerning their preaching and church-government.

(1.) It was part of their business to teach the people; and herein they must approve themselves both *skilful* and *faithful*, ver. 23. They shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the profane, between good and evil, lawful and unlawful, that they may neither scruple what is lawful, nor venture upon what is unlawful; that they may not pollute what is holy, nor pollute themselves with what is profane. Ministers must take pains to cause people to discern between the clean and the unclean, that they may not confound the distinctions between right and wrong, nor mistake concerning them, so as to put darkness for light, and light for darkness, but may have a good judgment of discretion concerning their own actions.

(2.) It was part of their business to judge upon appeals made to them, Deut. xvii. 8, 9. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment, ver. 24. They shall have the honesty to stand up for what is right, and when they have passed a right judgment shall have the courage to stand to it and stand by it.

They must judge, not according to their own fancies or inclinations, or secular interests, but according to my judgments, that must be their rule and standard. Note, Ministers must decide controversies according to the word of God, to the law and to the testimony, Sit liber judex. Their business is to keep courts in God's name, to preside in the congregations of his people. And herein they must go by the statute-book, they shall keep my statutes in all mine assemblies. God calls the assemblies of his people his assemblies, because they are held in his name, to his glory. Ministers are the masters of those assemblies, are to preside in them; and in all their acts must keep close to God's laws. Another part of their work, as church-governors, is to hallow God's sabbaths, to do the publick work of that day with a becoming care and reverence, as the work of a holy day should be done; and to see that God's people also sanctify that day, and do nothing to pollute it.

6. Concerning their mourning for dead relations. The rule here agrees with the law of Moses, Lev. xxi. 1, 11. A priest shall not come near any dead body (for they must be purified from dead works) except of their next relations, ver. 25. Decent expressions of a pious sorrow for dear relations when they are removed by death, is not disagreeable to the character of a minister. Yet by this approach to the dead body of a relation, they contracted a ceremonial pollution, from which they must be cleansed by a sin-offering, before they went in again to minister, ver. 26, 27. Note, Tho' sorrow for the dead is very allowable and commendable, yet there is danger of finning in it, either by excess, or dissimulation; and those tears have too often need to be wept over again.

7. Concerning their maintenance. They must live upon the altar at which they served, and live comfortably, ver. 28. Ye shall give them no possession in Israel, no lands or tenements, lest they should be entangled with the affairs of this life; for God hath said, I am their inheritance, and they need no other in reserve; I am their possession, and they need no other in hand: Some land was allowed them, chap. xlviii. 10. But their principal subsistence was by their office. What God appropriated to himself, they were the receivers of, to their own proper use and behoof; they lived upon the holy things; and so God himself was the portion both of their inheritance and of their cup. Note, Those who have God for their inheritance and their possession, may be content with a little, and ought not to covet a great deal of the possessions and inheritances of this earth. If we have God, we have all; and therefore may well reckon that we have enough.

Observe, 1. What the priests were to have from the people, for their maintenance and encouragement. (1.) They must have the flesh of many of their offerings, the sin-offering and trespass-offering, which would supply them and their families with flesh-meat; and the meat-offerings, which would supply them with bread. What we offer to God, will redound to our own advantage. (2.) They must have every dedicate devoted thing in Israel, which was in many cases to be turned into money, and given to the priest. This is explained, ver. 30. every oblation, or free-will-offering, which in times of reformation and devotion would be many and considerable, of all of every sort of your oblations shall be the priests. We have the law concerning them, Lev. xxvii. (3.) They were to have the first of the dough, when it was going to the oven, as well as the first of their fruits, when they were going to the barn. God that is the first, must have the first; and if it belong to him, his priests must have it. We may then comfortably enjoy what we have, when a share of it has been first set apart for works of piety and charity. To this the apostle's rule bears some analogy, to begin the week with laying by for pious uses, 1 Cor. xvi. 2. The priests being so well provided for, it would be inexcusable in them, if they (contrary to the law which every Israelite is bound by) should eat that which is torn, or dead of itself, ver. 31. Those that were in want of necessary food might perhaps expect to be dispensed with in such a case. Poverty has its temptations, but the priests were so well provided for, that they could have no pretence for it.

2. What the people might expect from the priest for their recompence. They that are kind to a prophet, to a priest, shall have a prophet's, a priest's, reward, that he may cause the blessing to rest in thine house, ver. 30. that God may cause it by commanding it, that the priest may cause it by praying for it; and it was part of the priest's work to bless the people in the name of the Lord; not only their congregations, but their families. Note, It is all in all to the comfort of any house to have the blessing of God upon it, and to have the blessing to rest in it; to dwell where we dwell, and to attend the entail of it upon those that shall come after us. And the way to have the blessing of God abide upon our estates is to honour God with them, and to give him and his ministers, him and his poor, their share out of them. God blebseth, he surely blebseth the habitation of those who thus are just, Prov. iii. 33. And ministers by instructing and praying for the families that are kind to them, should do their part towards causing the blessing to rest there. Peace be to this house.

C H A P. XLV.

In this chapter is further represented to the prophet in vision;
 (1.) *The division of the holy land. So much for the temple and the priests that attended the service of it, ver. 1—4. So much for the Levites, ver. 5. So much for the city, ver. 6. So much for the prince, and the residue to the people, ver. 7, 8. (2.) The ordinances of justice that were given both to prince and people, ver. 9—12. (3.) The oblations they were to offer, and the prince's part in those oblations, ver. 13—17. Particularly, in the beginning of the year, ver. 18—20. and in the passover, and the feast of tabernacles, ver. 21—25. And all this seems to point at the new church-state that should be set up under the gospel, which both for extent and purity should far exceed that of the Old Testament.*

MOREOVER, when ye shall divide by lot the land for inheritance, ye shall offer an oblation unto the LORD, an holy portion of the land: the length shall be the length of five and twenty thousand reeds, and the breadth shall be ten thousand: this shall be holy in all the borders thereof round about.
 2. Of this there shall be for the sanctuary five hundred in length, with five hundred in breadth, square round about; and fifty cubits round about for the suburbs thereof. 3. And of this measure shalt thou measure the length of five and twenty thousand, and the breadth of ten thousand: and in it shall be the sanctuary, and the most holy place. 4. The holy portion of the land shall be for the priests the ministers of the sanctuary, which shall come near to minister unto the LORD, and it shall be a place for their houses, and an holy place for the sanctuary. 5. And the five and twenty thousand of length, and the ten thousand of breadth, shall also the Levites, the ministers of the house have for themselves, for a possession for twenty chambers. 6. ¶ And ye shall appoint the possession of the city five thousand broad, and five and twenty thousand long over against the oblation of the holy portion: it shall be for the whole house of Israel. 7. ¶ And a portion shall be for the prince on the one side, and on the other side of the oblation of the holy portion, and of the possession of the city, before the oblation of the holy portion, and before the possession of the city, from the west-side westward, and from the east-side eastward: and the length shall be over against one of the portions, from the west-border unto the east-border. 8. In the land shall be his possession in Israel, and my princes shall no more oppress my people, and the rest of the land shall they give to the house of Israel according to their tribes.

Directions are here given for the dividing of the land after their return to it; and God having warranted them to do it, it would be an act of faith, and not of folly, thus to divide it before they had it. And it would be welcome news to the captives, to hear that they should not only return to their own land, but that whereas they were now but few in number, they should increase and multiply, so as to replenish it. But this never had its accomplishment in the Jewish state, after the return out of captivity. But was to be fulfilled in the model of the Christian church, which was perfectly new (as this division of the land was quite different from that in Joshua's time) and much enlarged by the accession of the Gentiles to it; and will be perfected in the heavenly kingdom, of which the land of Canaan had always been a type. Now,

1. Here is the portion of land assigned to the sanctuary, in the midst of which the temple was to be built, with all its courts and purlieus; the rest round about it was for the priests. This is called, ver. 1. an oblation to the Lord; for what is given in works of piety, for the maintenance and support of the worship of God, and the advancement of religion, God accepts as given to him, if it be done with a single eye. It is a holy portion of the land, which is to be set out first as the first fruits that sanctify the lump. The appropriating of lands for the support of religion and the ministry, is an act of piety that bids as fair for perpetuity, and the benefit of posterity, as any other. This holy portion of the land was to be measured, and the borders of it fixed, that the sanctuary itself might not have more than its share, and in time engross the whole land. So far

the lands of the church shall extend, and no further; as in our own kingdom donations to the church were of old limited by the statute of mortmain. The lands here allotted to the sanctuary were twenty-five thousand reeds (so our translation makes it, though some make them only cubits) in length, and ten thousand in breadth; about eighty miles one way, and thirty miles another way, say some; twenty-five miles one way, and ten miles the other way, so some. The priests and Levites that were to come near to minister, were to have their dwellings in this portion of the land, that was round about the sanctuary, that they might be near their work; whereas by the distribution of the land in Joshua's time the cities of the priests and Levites were dispersed all the nation over. This intimates that gospel ministers should reside upon their charge; where their service lies, there must they live.

2. Next to the lands of the sanctuary, the city lands are assigned, in which the holy city was to be built, and with the issues and profits of which the citizens were to be maintained, ver. 6. it shall be for the whole house of Israel; not appropriated as before, to one tribe or two, but some of all the tribes shall dwell in the city, as we find they did, Neh. xi. 1, 2. The portion for the city was full as long, but only half as broad as that for the sanctuary; for the city was enriched by trade, and therefore had the less need of lands.

3. The next allotment after the church lands, and the city lands, is of the crown-lands, ver. 7, 8. Here is no admeasurement of these, but they are said to lie on the one side, and on the other side of the church lands and city lands, to intimate that the prince with his wealth and power was to be a protection to both. Some make the prince's share equal to the church's and city's share, both together; others make it to be a thirteenth part of the rest of the land, the other twelve being for the twelve tribes. The prince that attends continually to the administration of publick affairs, must have wherewithal to support his dignity, and have abundance that he may not be in temptation to oppress the people; which yet with many doth not prevent that. But the grace of God shall prevent it, for it is promised here, my princes shall no more oppress my people; for God will make the officers peace, and the exactors righteousness. Notwithstanding this, we find that after the return of the Jews to their own land, the princes were complained of for their exactions. But Nehemiah was one that did not do as the former governors, and yet kept a handsome court, Neh. v. 15, 18. But so much is said of the prince in this mystical holy state to intimate that in the gospel-church, magistrates should be as nursing fathers to it, and Christian princes its patrons and protectors; and the holy religion they profess, as far as they are subject to the power of it, will restrain them from oppressing God's people, because they are more his people than theirs.

4. The rest of the lands were to be distributed to the people, according to their tribes, who had reason to think themselves well settled, when they had both the testimony of Israel to near them, and the throne of judgment.

9. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel: remove violence and spoil, and execute judgment and justice, and take away your exactions from my people, saith the Lord GOD.

10. Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath. 11. The ephah and the bath shall be of one measure, that the bath may contain the tenth part of an homer, and the ephah the tenth part of an homer: the measure thereof shall be after the homer. 12. And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, fifteen shekels shall be your maneh.

We have here some general rules of justice laid down both for prince and people, the rules of distributive and commutative justice; for godliness without honesty is but a form of godliness, will neither please God, nor avail to the benefit of any people. Be it therefore enacted by the authority of the church's King and God,

1. That princes do not oppress their subjects, but duly and faithfully administer justice among them, ver. 9. Let it suffice you, O princes of Israel, that you have been oppressive to the people, and have enriched yourselves by spoil and violence, that you have so long fleeced the flock, instead of feeding them, and from henceforward do so no more. Note, Even princes and great men that have long done amiss, must at length think it time, high time to reform and amend; for no prescription will justify a wrong. Instead of saying they have been long accustomed to oppress, and therefore may persist in it, for the custom will bear them out, they should say they have been long accustomed to it, and therefore, as here, Let the time past suffice, and let them now remove violence and spoil; let them drop wrongful demands, cancel wrongful usages, and turn out those from employments under them that do violence. Let them take away their exactions, ease their subjects of those taxes, which they find lie heavy upon them, and let them execute judgment and justice according to law, as the duty of their place

place requires. Note, All princes, but especially the princes of Israel, are concerned to do justice; for of their people, God saith, they are my people, and they in a special manner *rule for God*.

2. That one neighbour doth not cheat another in commerce, *ver. 10. ye shall have just balances*, in which to weigh both money and goods; a *just ephah* for dry measure of corn and flour, a *just bath* for the measure of liquids, wine and oil; and the *ephah* and *bath* shall be of *one measure*, the tenth part of a *chomer* or *cor*, *ver. 11*. So that the ephah and bath contained (as the learned Dr Cumberland has computed) seven wine gallons, and four pints, and something more. An omer was but the tenth part of an ephah, *Exod. xvi. 36*. and the hundredth part of a *chomer* or *homer*, and contained about six pints. The *shekel* is here settled, *ver. 13*. it is twenty *gerahs*, just half a Roman ounce, in our money two shillings four pence farthing, and almost the eighth part of a farthing, as the aforesaid learned man exactly computes it. By the shekels, the *maneh*, or pound, was reckoned; which when it was set for a meer weight (saith bishop Cumberland) without respect to coinage, contained just one hundred shekels, as appears by comparing *1 Kin. x. 17*. where it is said three *manehs*, or *pounds of gold*, went to one *shield*, with the parallel place, *2 Chron. ix. 16*. where it is said, three hundred shekels of gold went to one *shield*. But when the *maneh* is set for a sum of money or coin, it contains but sixty shekels, as appears here; where twenty shekels, twenty-five shekels, and fifteen shekels, which in all make sixty, shall be the *maneh*. But it is thus reckoned, because they had one piece of money that weighed twenty shekels, another twenty five, another fifteen, all which made up one pound; as a learned writer here observes. Note, It concerns God's Israel to be very honest and just in all their dealings, very punctual and exact in rendering to all their due, and very cautious to do wrong to none, because otherwise they spoil the acceptableness of their profession with God, and the reputation of it before men.

13. This is the oblation that ye shall offer; the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of wheat, and ye shall give the sixth part of an ephah of an homer of barley. 14. Concerning the ordinance of oyl, the bath of oyl, ye shall offer the tenth part of a bath out of the cor, which is an homer of ten baths; for ten baths are an homer: 15. And one lamb out of the flock, out of two hundred, out of the fat pastures of Israel, for a meat-offering, and for a burnt-offering, and for peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for them, saith the Lord GOD. 16. All the people of the land shall give this oblation for the prince in Israel. 17. And it shall be the princes part to give burnt-offerings, and meat-offerings, and drink-offerings, in the feasts, and in the new-moons, and in the sabbaths, in all solemnities of the house of Israel: he shall prepare the sin-offering, and the meat-offering, and the burnt-offering, and the peace-offerings, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. 18. Thus saith the Lord GOD, In the first month, in the first day of the month, thou shalt take a young bullock without blemish, and cleanse the sanctuary. 19. And the priest shall take of the blood of the sin-offering, and put it upon the posts of the house, and upon the four corners of the fettle of the altar, and upon the posts of the gate of the inner court. 20. And so thou shalt do the seventh day of the month, for every one that erreth, and for him that is simple: so shall ye reconcile the house. 21. In the first month, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days, unleavened bread shall be eaten. 22. And upon that day shall the prince prepare for himself, and for all the people of the land, a bullock for a sin-offering. 23. And seven days of the feast he shall prepare a burnt-offering to the LORD, seven bullocks, and seven rams without blemish, daily the seven days, and a kid of the goats daily for a sin-offering. 24. And he shall prepare a meat-offering of an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram, and an hin of oyl for an ephah. 25. In the seventh month, in the fifteenth day of the month shall he do the like in the feast of the seven days, according to the sin-offering, according to the burnt-offering, and according to the meat-offering, and according to the oyl.

Having laid down the rules of righteousness towards men, which is really a branch of true religion, he comes next to give

some directions for their religion towards God, which is a branch of universal righteousness.

1. It is required that they offer an oblation to the Lord, out of what they have, *ver. 13*. All the people of the land must give an oblation, *ver. 16*. As God's tenants they must pay a quit-rent to their great landlord; they had offered an oblation out of their real estates, *ver. 1*. a holy portion of their land; now they are directed to offer an oblation out of their personal estates, their goods and chattels, as an acknowledgment of their receivings from him, their dependence on him, and their obligations to him. Note, Whatever our substance is we must honour God with it, by giving him his dues out of it. Not that God has need of, or may be benefited by any thing that we can give him, *Psal. l. 9*. No, it is but an oblation, we only offer it to him, the benefit of it returns back to our selves, to his poor, who as our neighbours are our selves, or to his ministers who serve continually for our good.

2. The proportion of this oblation is here determined, which was not done by the law of Moses. No mention is made of the tithe, but only of this oblation. And the quantum of this is thus settled. (1.) Out of their corn they were to offer a sixtieth part; out of every homer of wheat and barley, which contained ten ephahs, they were to offer the sixth part of one ephah, which was a sixtieth part of the whole, *ver. 13*. (2.) Out of their oil, (and probably their wine too) they were to offer a hundredth part, for this oblation; out of every cor or homer, which contained ten baths, they were to offer the tenth part of one bath, *ver. 14*. This was given to the altar; for in every meat-offering there was flour mingled with oil. (3.) Out of their flocks they were to give one lamb out of two hundred; that was the smallest proportion of all, *ver. 15*. But it must be out of the fat pastures of Israel. They must not offer to God that which was taken up from the common, but the fattest and best they had, for burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; the former were offered for the giving of glory to God, the latter for the fetching in of mercy, grace, and peace from God; and in our spiritual sacrifices there are our two great errands at the throne of grace; but in order to the acceptance of both, these sacrifices were to make reconciliation for them; Christ is our sacrifice of atonement, by whom reconciliation is made, and to him we must have an eye in our sacrifices of acknowledgment.

3. This oblation must be given for the prince in Israel, *ver. 16*. some read it to the prince, and understand it of Christ, who is indeed the prince in Israel, to whom we must offer our oblations, and into whose hand we must put them to be presented to the Father. Or, they shall give it with the prince; every private person shall bring his oblation to be offered with that of the prince. For it follows, *ver. 17*. it shall be the princes part to provide all the offerings; to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. The people were to bring their oblations to him, according to the foregoing rules, and he was to bring them to the sanctuary, and to make up what fell short out of his own. Note, It is the duty of rulers to take care of religion, and to see that the duties of it be regularly and carefully performed by those under their charge, and that nothing be wanting that is requisite thereto: the magistrate is the keeper of both tables; and it is a happy thing when those that are above others in power and dignity, go before them in the service of God.

4. Some particular solemnities are here appointed.

1. Here is one in the beginning of the year, which seems to be altogether new, and not instituted by the law of Moses; it is the annual solemnity of cleansing the sanctuary. (1.) On the first day of the first month, upon new-year's-day, they were to offer a sacrifice for the cleansing of the sanctuary, *ver. 18*. i. e. to make atonement for the iniquity of the holy things the year past, that they might bring none of the guilt of them into the services of the new year; and to implore grace for the preventing of the iniquity, and for the better performance of the service of the sanctuary the ensuing year. And in token of this, the blood of this sin-offering was to be put upon the posts of the temple, the four corners, not of the altar, but the fettle of the altar, and the posts of the gate of the inner court, *ver. 19*. to signify that by atonement was intended to be made for the sins of all the servants that attended that house, priests, Levites, and people, even the sins that were found in all their services. Note, Even sanctuaries on earth need cleansing, frequent cleansing; that above needs none. That worship God together should oft join in renewing their repentance for their manifold defects, and applying the blood of Christ for the pardon of them, and in renewing their covenant to be more careful for the future; and it is very seasonable to begin the year with this work; as Hezekiah did when it had been long neglected, *2 Chron. xxix. 17*. They were here appointed to cleanse the sanctuary upon the first day of the month, because the fourteenth day of the month they were to eat the passover, an ordinance which of all other the Old Testament institutions, is most in it of Christ and gospel grace, and therefore it was very fit they should begin to prepare for it a fortnight before, cleansing the sanctuary. (2.) This sacrifice was to be repeated the seventh day of the first month, *ver. 20*. And then it was intended to make atonement for every one that erreth, and him that is simple. Note, He that sins, errs, and is simple

he mistakes, he goes out of the way, and shews himself to be foolish and unwise. But here it is spoken of those sins which are committed through ignorance, mistake, or inadvertency, whether by any of the priests, or of the Levites, or of the people. Such sins, sacrifices were appointed to atone for, which men were surprized into, did before they were aware; which they would not have done, if they had known and remembered aright, which they were overtaken in, and for which afterwards they condemn themselves. But for presumptuous sins, committed with a high hand, there was no sacrifice appointed, *Numb. xv. 30.* By these repeated sacrifices ye shall reconcile the house; i. e. God will be reconciled to it, and continue the tokens of his presence in it, and will let it alone this year also.

2. The passover was to be religiously observed, at the time appointed, *ver. 21.* Christ is our *passover* that is sacrificed for us; we celebrate the memorial of that sacrifice, and feast upon it, triumphing in our deliverance out of the Egyptian slavery of sin, and our preservation from the sword of the destroying angel, the sword of divine justice, in the Lord's supper, which is our *passover feast*; as the whole Christian life is, and must be, the feast of *unleavened bread*. It is here appointed that the prince shall prepare a *sin-offering* to be offered for himself and the people; a bullock on the first day, *ver. 21.* and a *kid of the goats* every other day, *ver. 23.* to teach us in all our attendance upon God for communion with him, to have an eye to the great sin-offering, by which *transgression* was finished, and an *everlasting righteousness* brought in. On every day of the feast there was to be a *burnt-offering*, purely for the honour of God, of no less than seven bullocks, and seven rams, with their meat-offering, which were wholly consumed upon the altar, and yet *no waste*, *ver. 23, 24.*

3. The feast of tabernacles; that is spoken of next, *ver. 25.* and no mention of the feast of pentecost, which came between that of the passover and that of tabernacles. Orders are here given (above what were given by the law of Moses) for the same sacrifices to be offered during the seven days of the passover. See the deficiency of the legal sacrifices for sin; they were therefore oft repeated, not only every year but every feast, every day of the feast, because they could not make the comers thereunto perfect, *Heb. x. 1, 3.* See the necessity of our frequent repeating the same religious exercises. Though the sacrifice of atonement is offered *once for all*, yet the sacrifices of acknowledgment, that of a broken heart, that of a thankful heart, must be *every day* offered, those spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. We should, as here, fall into a method of holy duties, and stick to it.

C H A P. XLVI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Some further rules given both to the priests and to the people, relating to their worship, *ver. 1—15.* (2.) A law concerning the prince's disposal of his inheritance, *ver. 16—18.* (3.) A description of the places provided for the boiling of the sacrifices, and the baking of the meat-offerings, *ver. 19—24.*

1. **T**HUS saith the Lord GOD, The gate of the inner court that looketh toward the east, shall be shut the six working-days: but on the sabbath it shall be opened, and in the day of the new-moon it shall be opened. 2. And the prince shall enter by the way of the porch of that gate without, and shall stand by the post of the gate, and the priests shall prepare his burnt-offering, and his peace-offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate: then he shall go forth, but the gate shall not be shut until the evening. 3. Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the door of this gate before the LORD, in the sabbaths, and in the new-moons. 4. And the burnt-offering that the prince shall offer unto the LORD in the sabbath-day, shall be six lambs without blemish, and a ram without blemish. 5. And the meat-offering shall be an ephah for a ram, and the meat-offering for the lambs, as he shall be able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 6. And in the day of the new-moon it shall be a young bullock without blemish, and six lambs, and a ram: they shall be without blemish. 7. And he shall prepare a meat-offering, an ephah for a bullock, and an ephah for a ram: and for the lambs according as his hand shall attain unto, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 8. And when the prince shall enter, he shall go in

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by the way of the porch of that gate, and he shall go forth by the way thereof. 9. ¶ But when the people of the land shall come before the LORD in the solemn feasts, he that entreth, in by the way of the north-gate to worship, shall go out by the way of the south-gate: and he that entreth by the way of the south-gate, shall go forth by the way of the north-gate: he shall not return by the way of the gate whereby he came in, but shall go forth over against it. 10. And the prince in the midst of them, when they go in, shall go in; and when they go forth, shall go forth. 11. And in the feasts, and in the solemnities, the meat-offering shall be an ephah to a bullock, and an ephah to a ram, and to the lambs as he is able to give, and an hin of oil to an ephah. 12. Now when the prince shall prepare a voluntary burnt-offering, or peace-offerings, voluntarily unto the LORD, one shall then open him the gate that looketh toward the east, and he shall prepare his burnt-offering, and his peace-offerings, as he did on the sabbath-day: then he shall go forth, and after his going forth, one shall shut the gate. 13. Thou shalt daily prepare a burnt offering unto the LORD, of a lamb of the first year without blemish; thou shalt prepare it every morning. 14. And thou shalt prepare a meat-offering for it every morning, the sixth part of an ephah, and the third part of an hin of oil, to temper with the fine flour; a meat-offering continually, by a perpetual ordinance unto the LORD. 15. Thus shall they prepare the lamb, and the meat-offering, and the oil, every morning, for a continual burnt-offering.

Whether the rules for publick worship here laid down were designed to be observed, even in those things wherein they differed from the law of Moses, and were so observed under the second temple, is not certain; we find not in the history of that latter part of the Jewish church, that they governed themselves in their worship by these ordinances, as one would think they should have done, but only by the law of Moses, looking upon this *then* in the next age after as *mystical*, and not *literal*.

We may observe in these verses,

1. That the place of worship was fixed, and rules given concerning that, both to prince and people.

(1.) The east-gate which was kept shut at other times was to be opened, on the sabbath-days, in the new moons, *ver. 1.* and whenever the prince offered a voluntary offering, *ver. 12.* Of the keeping of this gate ordinarily shut we read before, *chap. xlv. 2.* whereas the other gates of the court were opened every day, this only on *high days*, and on special occasions, when it was opened for the prince, who was to go in by the way of the porch of that gate, *ver. 2.* and again, *ver. 8.* Some think he went in with the priests and Levites into the inner court, (for into that court this gate was the entrance) and they observe that magistrates and ministers should join forces, and go the same way, hand in hand, in promoting the service of God. But it should rather seem that he did not go through the gate (as the glory of the Lord had done) though it was open, but he went by the way of the porch of the gate, stood at the post of the gate, and worshipped at the threshold of the gate, *ver. 2.* where he had a full view of the priests performances at the altar, and signified his concurrence in them, for himself, and for the people of the land, that stood behind him at the door of that gate, *ver. 3.* Thus must every prince shew himself to be of David's mind, who would very willingly be a door-keeper in the house of his God, and, as the word there is, lie at the threshold, *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* Note, The greatest of men are less than the least of the ordinances of God. Even princes themselves, when they draw near to God must worship with reverence and godly fear; owning that even they are unworthy to approach to him. But Christ is our prince whom God causeth to draw near, and approach to him, *Jer. xxx. 21.*

2. As to the north-gate and south-gate, by which they entred into the court of the people (not into the inner court) there was this rule given, that whoever came in at the north-gate should go out at the south-gate, and whoever came in at the south-gate should go out at the north-gate, *ver. 9.* Some think this was to prevent thrusting and jostling one another, for God is the God of order, and not of confusion. We may suppose they came in at the gate that was next their own houses, but when they went away, God would have them go out at that gate which would lead them the furthest way about, that they might have time for meditation; being thereby obliged to go a great way round the sanctuary, they might have an opportunity to consider the palaces of it, and if they improved their time well in fetching this circuit, they would call it the next way home. Some observe that this may

mind us in the service of God to be still pressing forward, *Phil. iii. 13.* and not to *look back*; and in our attendance upon ordinances not to go back as we came; but more holy, and heavenly, and spiritual.

(3.) It is appointed that the people shall worship at the *door of the east-gate*, where the prince doth, he at the head, and they attending him, both in the *sabbaths*, and in the *new moons*, *ver. 3.* and that when they come in, and go out, the prince shall be in the *midst of them*, *ver. 10.* Note, Great men should by their constant and reverent attendance on God in publick worship, give a good example to their inferiors, both engaging them and encouraging them to do likewise. It is a very graceful, becoming thing for persons of quality to go to church with their servants, and tenants, and poor neighbours about them, and to behave themselves there with an air of seriousness and devotion; and those who thus *honour God* with their honour, he will *delight to honour*.

2. That the ordinances of worship were fixed. Though the prince is supposed himself to be a very hearty zealous friend to the sanctuary, yet it is not left to him, no not in concert with the priests, to appoint what sacrifices shall be offered, but God himself appoints them; for it is his prerogative to institute the rites and ceremonies of religious worship.

1. Every morning as duly as the morning came, they must offer a lamb for a *burnt-offering*, *ver. 13.* It is strange that no mention is made of the *evening sacrifice*; but Christ being come, and having offered himself now in the *end of the world*, *Heb. ix. 26.* we are to look upon him as the *evening sacrifice*, about the time of the offering up of which he died.

2. On the sabbath-days, whereas by the law of Moses four lambs were to be offered, *Exod. xxviii. 9.* it is here appointed that (at the prince's charge) there shall be *six lambs* offered, and a ram beside, *ver. 4.* To intimate how much we should abound in sabbath-work, now in gospel-time, and what plenty of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise we should offer up to God on that day; and if *with such sacrifices God is well pleased*, sure we have a great deal of reason to be so.

3. On the new moons, in the beginning of their months, there was over and above the usual sabbath-sacrifices, the additional offering of a young bullock, *ver. 6.* Those who do much for God and their souls stately and constantly, must yet upon some occasions do yet more.

4. All the sacrifices were to be *without blemish*; so Christ the great sacrifice was, *1 Pet. i. 19.* and so Christians who are to present themselves to God as living sacrifices, should aim and endeavour to be; *blameless and harmless, and without rebuke.*

5. All the sacrifices were to have their meat-offerings annexed to them; for so the law of Moses had appointed, to shew what a good table God keeps in his house; and that we ought to *honour him* with the fruit of our ground, as well as with the fruit of our cattle, because in both he hath *blessed us*, *Deut. xxviii. 4.* In the beginning Cain offered the one; and Abel the other. Some observe that the *meat-offerings* here, are much larger in proportion than they were by the law of Moses. Then it was *three-tenth-deals to a bullock*, and *two to a ram*, (*i. e.* so many tenth parts of an ephah) and half a hin of oil at the most, *Numb. xv. 6—9.* But here for every bullock and every ram, a whole ephah, and a whole hin of oil, *ver. 7.* These unbloody sacrifices shall be more abounded in; or in general it intimates, that as now under the gospel God abounds in the gifts of his grace to us, more than under the law, so we should abound in the returns of praise and duty to him. But it is observable that in the meat-offering *for the lambs*, the prince is allowed to offer *as he shall be able to give*, *ver. 5.* and *ver. 7.* *as his hand shall attain unto*, and again, *ver. 11.* Note, Princes themselves must spend as they can afford; and even in that which is laid out in works of piety, God expects and requires but that we should do according to our ability; every man *as God hath prospered him*, *1 Cor. xvi. 2.* God hath not made us to serve with an offering, *Isa. xliii. 23.* but considers our frame and state. Yet this will not countenance those who pretend a disability that is not real; or those who by their extravagances in other things disable themselves to do the good they should. And we find those praised, who in an extraordinary case of charity, went not only to their power, but beyond their power.

16. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, If the prince give a gift unto any of his sons, the inheritance thereof shall be his sons, it shall be their possession by inheritance. 17. But if he give a gift of his inheritance to one of his servants, then it shall be his to the year of liberty; after, it shall return to the prince: but his inheritance shall be his sons for them. 18. Moreover, the prince shall not take of the peoples inheritance, by oppression to thrust them out of their possession; but he shall give his sons inheritance out of his own possession: that my people be not scattered every man from his possession.

We have here a law for the limiting of the power of the prince in the disposing of the crown-lands.

1. If he has a son that is a favourite, or has merited well, he may, if he pleaseth, as a token of his favour, and in recompence for his services, settle some parts of his lands upon him and his heirs for ever, *ver. 16.* provided it do not go out of the family; there may be a cause for parents when their children are grown up, to be more kind to one than to another, as Jacob gave to Joseph one portion *above his brethren*, *Gen. xlviii. 22.*

2. Yet if he have a servant that is a favourite, he may not in like manner settle lands upon him, *ver. 17.* But if he see cause, he may give him lands to the year of Jubilee, and then they must return to the family again, *ver. 17.* The servant might have the rents, issues, and profits, for such a term; but the inheritance, the *Jus proprietarium* shall remain in the prince and his heirs. It was fit a difference should be put between a child and a servant, like that *Job. viii. 35.* *The servant abideth not in the house for ever, as the son doth.*

3. What estates he gives his children, must be of his own, *ver. 18.* He shall not take of the peoples inheritance, under pretence of having many children to provide for; he shall not find ways to make them forfeit their estates, or to force them to sell them, and so thrust his subjects out of their possession, but let him and his sons be content with their own; it is far from being a prince's honour to increase the wealth of his family and crown, by encroaching upon the rights and properties of his subjects; nor will he himself be a gainer by it at last, for he will be but a poor prince, when the people are scattered every man from his possession, when they quit their native country, being forced out of it by oppression, chusing rather to live among strangers that are free people, and where what they have they can call their own, be it never so little. It is the interest of princes to rule in the hearts of their subjects, and then all they have is in the best manner at their service. It is better for themselves to gain their affections by protecting their rights, than to gain their estates by invading them.

19. ¶ After, he brought me through the entry, which was at the side of the gate, into the holy chambers of the priests, which looked toward the north: and behold, there was a place on the two sides west-ward. 20. Then said he unto me, This is the place where the priests shall boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering, where they shall bake the meat-offering: that they bear them not out into the utter court, to sanctify the people. 21. Then he brought me forth into the utter court, and caused me to pass by the four corners of the court, and behold, in every corner of the court there was a court. 22. In the four corners of the court there were courts joined of forty cubits long, and thirty broad: these four corners were of one measure. 23. And there was a row of building round about in them, round about them four, and it was made with boiling-places under the rows round about. 24. Then said he unto me, These are the places of them that boil, where the ministers of the house shall boil the sacrifice of the people.

We have here a further discovery of buildings about the temple which we did not observe before, and those were places to boil the flesh of the offerings, *ver. 20.* He that kept such a plentiful table at his altar, had need have large kitchens; and a wise builder will provide conveniences of that kind. Observe,

1. Where those boiling-places were situated. There were some at the entry into the inner court, *ver. 19.* And others under the rows, in the four corners of the outer court, *ver. 21, 22, 23.* These were the places where it is likely there was most room to spare for this purpose; and this purpose was found for the spare room, that none might be lost: Pity holy ground should be waste ground.

2. What use they were put to. In those places they were to boil the trespass-offering, and the sin-offering, those parts of them which were allotted to the priests, and which were more sacred than the flesh of the peace-offerings, of which the offerers also had a share. There also they were to bake the meat-offering, their share of it which they had from the altar for their own tables, *ver. 20.* Care was taken that they bear them not out into the outer court to sanctify the people. Let them not pretend to sanctify the people with his holy flesh, and so impose upon them; or let not the people imagine, that by touching these sacred things they were sanctified, and made ever the better or more acceptable to God. It should seem by *Hag. ii. 12.* there were those that had such a conceit; and therefore the priests must not carry any of the holy flesh away with them, lest they should encourage that conceit. Ministers must

must take heed of doing any thing to bolster up ignorant people in their superstitious vanities.

C H A P. XLVII.

In this chapter we have (1.) The vision of the holy waters, their rise, extent, depth, and healing virtue; the plenty of fish in them, and an account of the trees growing on the banks of them, ver. 1—12. (2.) An appointment of the borders of the land of Canaan, which was to be divided by lot to the tribes of Israel, and the strangers that sojourned among them, ver. 13—23.

1. **A**FTERWARD he brought me again unto the door of the house, and behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the fore-front of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south-side of the altar. 2. Then brought he me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward, and behold, there ran out waters on the right side. 3. And when the man that had the line in his hand, went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters: the waters were to the ancles. 4. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees: again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. 5. Afterward he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. 6. ¶ And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. 7. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out towards the east-country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. 9. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed, and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. 10. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets, their fish shall be according to their kinds as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. 11. But the miry places thereof, and the marshes thereof, shall not be healed, they shall be given to salt. 12. And by the river upon the bank thereof on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to its months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary, and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

This part of Ezekiel's vision must so necessarily have a mystical and spiritual meaning, that from thence we conclude the other parts of his vision hath so too; for it cannot be applied to the waters brought by pipes into the temple for the washing of the sacrifices, and the keeping of the temple clean, and the carrying off those waters, for that would be to turn this pleasant river into a sink or common sewer. That prophecy Zech. xiv. 8. may explain it, of living waters that shall go out from Jerusalem, half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea. And there is plainly a reference to this in St. John's vision of a pure river of water of life, Rev. xxii. 1. That seems to represent the glory and joy, which is grace perfected. This here seems to represent the grace and joy, which is glory begun. Most interpreters agree that these waters signify, the gospel of Christ, which went forth from Jerusalem, and spread itself into the countries about, and the gifts and powers of the holy Ghost which accompanied it, and by virtue of which it spread itself far, and produced strange and blessed effects. Ezekiel had

walked round the house again and again, and yet did not till now take notice of those waters; for God makes known his mind and will to his people, not all at once, but by degrees. Now observe,

1. The rise of these waters. He is not put to trace the streams to the fountain, but has the fountain-head first discovered to him, ver. 1. *Waters issued out from the threshold of the house eastward.* And from under the right side of the house, i. e. the south-side of the altar. And again, ver. 2. *there ran out waters on the right side;* signifying, that from Zion should go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem, Isa. ii. 3. There it was that the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, and endued them with the gift of tongues, that they might carry these waters to all nations. In the temple first they were to stand and preach the words of this life, Acts v. 20. They must preach the gospel to all nations, but must begin at Jerusalem, Luke xxiv. 47. But that is not all, Christ is the temple, he is the door, from him those living waters flow, out of his pierced side: It is the water that he gives us, that is the well of water which springs up, John iv. 14. And it is by believing in him that we receive from him rivers of living water; and this spake he of the Spirit, John vii. 38, 39. The original of these waters was not above-ground, but they sprang up from under the threshold; for the fountain of a believer's life is a mystery; it is hid with Christ in God, Col. iii. 3. Some observe that they came forth on the right side of the house, to intimate that gospel-blessings are right-hand blessings. It is also an encouragement to those who attend at wisdom's gates, at the posts of her doors, who are willing to lie at the threshold of God's house, as David was, that they lie at the fountain-head of comfort and grace; the very entrance into God's word gives light and life, Psal. cxix. 130. David speaks it to the praise of Zion, *all my springs are in thee*, Psal. lxxxvii. 7. They came from the side of the altar, for it is in and by Jesus Christ the great altar (who sanctifies our gifts to God) that God hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in holy, heavenly places. From God as the fountain, in him as the chanel, flows the river, which makes glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High, Psal. xli. 4. But observe how much the blessedness and joy of glorified saints in heaven, exceed those of the best and happiest saints on earth; here the streams of our comfort arise from under the threshold; there they proceed from the throne, the throne of God and of the Lamb, Rev. xxii. 1.

2. The progress and increase of these waters. They went forth eastward, ver. 3. towards the east country, ver. 9. for so they were directed. The prophet and his guide followed the stream as it run down from the holy mountains, and when they had followed it about a thousand cubits, they went over cross it to try the depth of it, and it was to the ancles, ver. 3. Then they walked along on the bank of the river on the other side, a thousand cubits more, and then to try the depth of it they waded through it the second time, and it was up to their knees, ver. 4. They walked along by it a thousand cubits more, and then forded it the third time, and then it was up to their middle, the waters were to the loins; they then walked a thousand cubits further, and attempted to repass it the fourth time but found it impracticable, the waters were risen, either by the addition of brooks that fell into it above ground, or by springs under ground, so that they were waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over, ver. 5. Note, 1. The waters of the sanctuary are running waters, as those of a river, not standing waters as those of a pond. The gospel when it was first preached was still spreading further; grace in the soul is still pressing forwards; it is an active principle, *plus ultra*, onwards still, till it comes to perfection. 2. They are increasing waters. This river as it runs constantly, so the further it goes the fuller it grows. The gospel church was very small in its beginnings, like a little purling brook, but by degrees it came to be to the ancles, to the knees, many were added to it daily, and the grain of mustard seed grew up to be a great tree. The gifts of the Spirit increase by being exercised, and grace, where it is true, is growing like the light of the morning which shines more and more to the perfect day. 3. It is good for us to follow these waters, and go along with them. Observe the progress of the gospel in the world; observe the process of the work of grace in the heart; attend the motions of the blessed Spirit and walk after them, under a divine conduct, as Ezekiel here did. 4. It is good to be often searching into the things of God, and trying the depth of them; not only look on the surface of those waters, but go the bottom of them, as far as we can; be often digging, often diving into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as those who covet to be intimately acquainted with those things. 5. If we search into the things of God we shall find some things very plain and easy to be understood, as the waters that were but to the ancles; others more difficult, and which require a deeper search, as the waters to the knees or the loins; and some quite beyond our reach, which we cannot penetrate into, or account for, but despairing to find the bottom, must as St Paul, sit down at the brink, and adore the depth, Rom. xi. 33. It has

has been often said, that in the scripture, like these waters of the sanctuary, there are some places so ebb that a lamb may wade through them, and others so deep that an elephant may swim in them. And it is our wisdom, as the prophet here, to begin with that which is most easy, and get our hearts washed with those things, before we proceed to that which is dark and hard to be understood; it is good to take our work before us.

3. The extent of this river. *It issues towards the east country*, but from thence it either divides itself into several streams, or fetcheth a compass so as that it goes down into the desert, and so goes into the sea, either into the dead sea, which lay south-east, or the sea of Tiberias which lay north-east, or the great sea which lay west, ver. 8. This was accomplished when the gospel was preached with success throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria, Acts viii. 1. and afterwards the nations about, nay, and those that lay most remote, even in the isles of the sea, were enlightened and leavened by it. The sound of it went forth to the end of the world; and the enemies of it could no more prevail to stop the progress of it than that of a mighty river.

4. The healing virtue of this river. The waters of the sanctuary wherever they come, and have a free course, will be found a wonderful restorative. Being brought forth into the sea, the sulphureous lake of Sodom, that standing monument of divine vengeance, even those waters shall be healed, ver. 8. shall become sweet and pleasant, and healthful. This intimates the wonderful and blessed change that the gospel would make where-soever it came in its power; as great a change, in respect both of character and condition, as the turning of the dead sea into a fountain of gardens. When children of wrath became children of love; and those that were dead in trespasses and sins were made alive, then this was fulfilled. The gospel was as that salt which Elisha cast into the spring of the waters of Jericho with which he healed them, 2 Kings ii. 20, 21. Christ coming into the world to be its physician, sent his gospel, as the great medicine, the Panpharmakon, so there is in it a remedy for every malady. Nay, wherever these rivers come they make things to live, ver. 9. both plants and animals. To the water of life, Rev. xxii. 1, 17. Christ came that we may have life, and for that end he sends his gospel, every thing shall live whither the river comes. The grace of God makes dead sinners alive, and living saints lively; every thing is made fruitful and flourishing by it. But its effect is according as it is received, and as the mind is prepared and disposed to receive it; for, ver. 11. the marshes and miry places thereof, that are settled in the mire of their own sinfulness, and will not be healed or settled in the moisture of their own righteousness, and think they need no healing, their doom is, they shall not be healed; the same gospel which to others is a favour of life unto life, shall to them be a favour of death unto death, they shall be given to salt, i. e. to perpetual barrenness, Dent. xxix. 23. They that will not be watered with the grace of God and made fruitful, shall be abandoned to their own hearts lusts, and left for ever unfruitful. *He that is filthy, let him be filthy still. Never fruit grow on thee more for ever.* They shall be given to salt, i. e. to be monuments of divine justice, as Lot's wife that was turned into a pillar of salt to season others.

5. The great plenty of fish that should be in this river; every living moving thing shall be found here, shall live here, ver. 9. i. e. shall come on and prosper, shall be the best of the kind, and shall increase greatly; so that there shall be a very great multitude of fish, according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. There shall be as great plenty of the river fish, and as vast shoals of them, as there uses to be of salt-water fish, ver. 10. There shall be great numbers of Christians in the church, and those multiplying like fishes, in the rising generations, and the dew of their youth. In the creation the waters brought forth the fish abundantly, Gen. i. 20, 21. and they still live in and by the waters that produced them; so believers are begotten by the word of truth, James i. 18. and born by it, 1 Pet. i. 23. that river of God, by it they live, from it they have their maintenance, and subsistence; in the waters of the sanctuary they are as in their element, out of them they are as fish upon dry ground; so David was when he thirsted and panted for God, for the living God. Where the fish are known to be in abundance, thither will the fishers flock, and there they will cast their nets; and therefore to intimate the replenishing of these waters, and their being made every way useful, it is here foretold, that the fishers shall stand upon the banks of this river, from Engedi which lies on the border of the dead sea, to En-eglaim, another city that joins to that sea, and all along shall spread their nets. The dead sea which before was shunned as noisom and noxious shall be frequented; gospel grace makes those persons and places which were unprofitable and good for nothing, to become serviceable to God and man.

6. The trees that were on the banks of this river, many trees on the one side, and on the other, ver. 9. which made the prospect very pleasant and agreeable to the eye, the shelter of these trees also would be a convenience to the fishery: But

that is not all, ver. 12. they are trees for meat, and the fruit of them shall not be consumed, for it shall produce fresh fruit every month. The leaf shall be for medicine, and it shall not fade. This part of the vision is copied out into St John's vision very exactly, Rev. xxii. 2. where on either side of the river is said to grow the tree of life, which yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves were for the healing of the nations. Christians are supposed to be these trees; ministers especially; trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, Isa. lxi. 3. set by the rivers of water, the waters of the sanctuary, Psal. i. 3. grafted into Christ the tree of life, and by virtue of their union with him made trees of life too, rooted in him, Col. ii. 7. There is a great variety of these trees, through the diversity of gifts with which they are endued, by that one Spirit who worketh all in all. They grow on the bank of the river, for they keep close to holy ordinances, and through them derive from Christ sap and virtue. They are fruit trees, designed, as the fig-tree and the olive, with their fruits to honour God and man, Judges ix. 9. The fruit thereof shall be for meat, for the lips of the righteous feed many: The fruits of their righteousness are one way or other beneficial. The very leaves of these trees are for medicine, for bruises and sores, marg. Good Christians with their good discourses which are as their leaves, as well as with their charitable actions, which are as their fruits, do good to those about them, they strengthen the weak and bind up the broken-hearted. Their cheerfulness doth good like a medicine, not only to themselves but to others also. They shall be enabled by the grace of God to persevere in their goodness and usefulness; their leaf shall not fade, or lose its medicinal virtue, having not only life in their root, but sap in all their branches; their profession shall not wither, Psal. i. 3. neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed, i. e. they shall not lose the principle of their fruitfulness, but shall still bring forth fruit in old age, to shew that the Lord is upright, Psal. xcii. 14. Or, the reward of their fruitfulness shall abide for ever; they bring forth fruit that shall abound to their account in the great day, fruit to life eternal; that is indeed fruit which shall not be consumed. They bring new fruit according to their months, some in one month and others in another; so that still there shall be one or other found to serve the glory of God for the purpose he designs. Or, each one of them shall bring forth fruit monthly, which notes an abundant disposition to fruit-bearing, they shall never be weary of well doing; and a very happy climate, such as that there shall be a perpetual spring and summer. And the reason of this extraordinary fruitfulness is because their waters issued out of the sanctuary; it is not to be ascribed to any thing in themselves, but to the continual supplies of divine grace, with which they are watered every moment, Isa. xxvii. 3. for whoever planted them, it was that which gave the increase.

13. ¶ Thus saith the Lord GOD, This shall be the border, whereby ye shall inherit the land, according to the twelve tribes of Israel: Joseph shall have two portions. 14. And ye shall inherit it, one as well as another: concerning the which I lifted up mine hand to give it unto your fathers, and this land shall fall unto you for inheritance. 15. And this shall be the border of the land toward the north-side from the great sea, the way of Hethlon, as men go to Zedad: 16. Hamath, Berothah, Sibraim, which is between the border of Damascus, and the border of Hamath; Hazar-hatticon, which is by the coast of Hauran. 17. And the border from the sea, shall be Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus, and the north northward, and the border of Hamath: and this is the north-side. 18. And the east-side ye shall measure from Hauran, and from Damascus, and from Gilead, and from the land of Israel by Jordan, from the border unto the east-sea: and this is the east-side. 19. And the south-side south-ward from Tamar, even to the waters of strife in Kadesh, the river, to the great sea: and this is the south-side south-ward. 20. The west-side also shall be the great sea from the border, till a man come over against Hamath: this is the west-side. 21. So shall ye divide this land unto you, according to the tribes of Israel. 22. ¶ And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel, they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel. 23. And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.

We are now to pass from the affairs of the sanctuary to those of the state; from the city to the country.

1. The land of Canaan is here secured to them for an inheritance, *ver. 13. I lifted up my hand to give it unto your fathers, i. e. promised it upon oath to them and their posterity. Tho' the possession had been a great while discontinued, yet God has not forgot his oath which he swore to their fathers. Tho' God's providences may for a time seem to contradict his promises, yet the promise will certainly take place at last, for God will be ever mindful of his covenant. I lifted up mine hand to give it, and therefore it shall without fail fall to you for an inheritance. Thus the heavenly Canaan is sure to all the seed, because it is what God that cannot lie hath promised.*

2. It is here circumscribed, and the bounds and limits of it fixed, which they must not pass over to encroach upon their neighbours, and which their neighbours shall not break through to encroach upon them. We had such a draught of the borders of Canaan, when Joshua was to put the people in possession of it, *Numb. xxxiv. 1, &c.* That begins with the salt sea in the south, goes round and ends there. This begins with Hamath about Damascus in the north, and so goes round and ends there, *ver. 20.* Note, It is God that appointeth the bounds of our habitation; and his Israel shall always have cause to say, that *the lines are fallen to them in pleasant places.* The lake of Sodom is here called *the east sea*, for it being healed by the waters of the sanctuary, it is no more to be called a *salt sea*, as it was in Numbers.

3. It is here ordered to be divided among the tribes of Israel, reckoning Joseph for two tribes to make up the number of twelve, when Levi was taken out to attend the sanctuary, and had his lot adjoining to that, *ver. 13, 21. ye shall inherit it, one as well as another, ver. 14.* The tribes shall have an equal share, one as much as another: as the tribes returned out of Babylon this seems unequal, because some tribes were much more numerous than the other, and indeed the most were of Judah and Benjamin, and very few of the other ten tribes; but as the twelve tribes stand in type and vision for the gospel church, the Israel of God, it was very equal, because we find in another vision, an equal number of each of the twelve tribes sealed for the living God, just *twelve thousand* of each, *Rev. vii. 5, &c.* And to those sealed ones these allotments did belong. It intimates likewise that all the subjects of Christ's kingdom have obtained like precious faith. Male and female, Jew and Gentile, bond and free, are all alike welcome to Christ, and made partakers of him.

4. The strangers that sojourn among them, *which shall beget children*, and be built up into families, and so help to people their country, *shall have inheritance among the tribes*, as if they had been native Israelites, *ver. 22, 23.* which was by no means allowed in Joshua's division of the land. This is an act for a general naturalization, which would teach the Jews who was their neighbour; not those only of their own nation and religion, but those whoever they were, that they had an opportunity of shewing kindness to, because from them they would be willing to receive kindness. It would likewise invite strangers to come settle among them, and put themselves under the wings of the Divine Majesty. But it certainly looks at gospel times, when the partition wall between Jew and Gentile was taken down, and both put upon a level before God, both made one in Christ, in whom there is no difference, *Rom. x. 12.* This land was a type of the heavenly Canaan, that better country, *Heb. xi. 16.* in which believing Gentiles shall have a blessed lot, as well as believing Jews, *Isa. lvi. 3.*

C H A P. XLVIII.

In this chapter we have particular directions given for the distribution of the land, of which we had the metes and bounds assigned in the foregoing chapter. (1.) The portions of the twelve tribes, seven to the north of the sanctuary, *ver. 1—7.* and five to the south, *ver. 23—29.* (2.) The allotment of land for the sanctuary, and the priests, *ver. 8—11.* for the Levites, *ver. 12—14.* for the city, *ver. 15—20.* and for the prince, *ver. 21, 22.* Much of this we had before, chap. xlv. (3.) A plan of the city, its gates, and the new name given to it, *ver. 30—35.* which seals up and concludes the vision and prophecy of this book.

NOW these are the names of the tribes, from the north-end to the coast of the way of Hethlon, as one goeth to Hamath, Hazar-enan, the border of Damascus north-ward, to the coast of Hamath (for these are his sides east and west) a portion for Dan. 2. And by the border of Dan, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Asher. 3. And by the border of Asher, from the east-side even

unto the west-side, a portion for Naphtali. 4. And by the border of Naphtali, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Manasseh. 5. And by the border of Manasseh, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Ephraim. 6. And by the border of Ephraim, from the east-side even unto the west-side, a portion for Reuben. 7. And by the border of Reuben, from the east-side unto the west-side, a portion for Judah. 8. ¶ And by the border of Judah, from the east-side unto the west-side, shall be the offering which ye shall offer of five and twenty thousand reeds in breadth, and in length as one of the other parts, from the east-side unto the west-side, and the sanctuary shall be in the midst of it. 9. The oblation that ye shall offer unto the LORD, shall be of five and twenty thousand in length, and of ten thousand in breadth. 10. And for them, even for the priests, shall be this holy oblation, toward the north, five and twenty thousand in length, and toward the west ten thousand in breadth, and toward the east ten thousand in breadth, and toward the south five and twenty thousand in length, and the sanctuary of the LORD shall be in the midst thereof. 11. It shall be for the priests that are sanctified, of the sons of Zadok, which have kept my charge, which went not astray when the children of Israel went astray as the Levites went astray. 12. And this oblation of the land that is offered, shall be unto them a thing most holy by the border of the Levites. 13. And over against the border of the priests, the Levites shall have five and twenty thousand in length, and ten thousand in breadth: all the length shall be five and twenty thousand, and the breadth ten thousand. 14. And they shall not sell of it, neither exchange, nor alienate the first-fruits of the land: for it is holy unto the LORD. 15. ¶ And the five thousand that are left in the breadth over against the five and twenty thousand, shall be a profane place for the city, for dwelling and for suburbs, and the city shall be in the midst thereof. 16. And these shall be the measures thereof, the north-side four thousand and five hundred, and the south-side four thousand and five hundred, and on the east-side four thousand and five hundred, and the west-side four thousand and five hundred. 17. And the suburbs of the city shall be toward the north two hundred and fifty, and toward the south two hundred and fifty, and toward the east two hundred and fifty, and toward the west two hundred and fifty. 18. And the residue in length over against the oblation of the holy portion, shall be ten thousand east-ward, and ten thousand west-ward: and it shall be over against the oblation of the holy portion, and the increase thereof shall be for food unto them that serve the city. 19. And they that serve the city, shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel. 20. All the oblations shall be five and twenty thousand, by five and twenty thousand: ye shall offer the holy oblation four-square, with the possession of the city. 21. ¶ And the residue shall be for the prince on the one side and on the other of the holy oblation, and of the possession of the city over against the five and twenty thousand, of the oblation toward the east-border, and west-ward over against the five and twenty thousand toward the west-border, over against the portions for the prince, and it shall be the holy oblation, and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the midst thereof. 22. Moreover, from the possession of the Levites, and from the possession of the city, being in the midst of that which is the princes, between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin, shall be for the prince. 23. As for the rest of the tribes, from the east-side unto the west-side, Benjamin shall have a portion. 24. And by the border of Benjamin, from the east-side unto the west-side, Simeon shall have a portion. 25. And by the border of Simeon, from the east-side unto the west-side, Issachar a portion. 26. And by the border of Issachar, from the east-side unto the west-side, Zebulun a portion. 27. And by the border of Zebulun, from the east-side unto the west-side, Gad a portion. 28. And by the border of Gad, at the south-side south-ward, the border shall be even from Tamar unto the waters of strife in Kadesh, and to the river toward

the great sea. 29. This is the land which ye shall divide by lot unto the tribes of Israel for inheritance, and these are their portions, saith the Lord GOD.

We have here a very short and ready way taken for the dividing of the land among the twelve tribes, not so tedious, and so far about as the way that was taken in Joshua's time; for in the distribution of spiritual and heavenly blessings, there is not that danger of murmuring and quarrelling as in the participation of temporal blessings; when God gave to the labourers every one his penny, those that were uneasy at it were soon put to silence, with *may I not do what I will with my own?* and such is the equal distribution here, among the tribes.

In this distribution of the land we may observe,

1. That it differs very much from the division of it in Joshua's time, nor agrees with the order of their birth, or their blessing by Jacob or Moses; Simeon here is not *divided* in Jacob, nor is Zebulun a *haven of ships*; a plain intimation that it is not so much to be understood *literally* as *spiritually*; tho' the mystery of it is very much hidden from us. In gospel times old things are passed away, *behold, all things are become new*. The Israel of God is cast into a new method.

2. That the tribe of Dan, which was last provided for in the first division of Canaan, *Josh. xix. 40.* is first provided for here, *ver. 1.* Thus in the gospel, the last shall be first, *Matt. xix. 30.* God in the dispensations of his grace doth not follow the same method that he doth in the disposals of his providence. But Dan had now his portion thereabouts where he had only one city before, northward, on the border of Damascus, and furthest of all from the sanctuary, because that tribe had revolted to idolatry.

3. That all the ten tribes, that were carried away by the king of Assyria, as well as the two tribes that were long after carried to Babylon, have their allotment in this visionary land; which some think had its accomplishment in the particular persons and families of those tribes which returned with Judah and Benjamin, of which we find many instances in Ezra and Nehemiah; and it is probable there were returns of many more afterwards at several times which are not recorded; and the Jews having Galilee, and other parts, that had been the possessions of the ten tribes put into their hands, in common with them, they enjoyed them. Grotius saith, if the ten tribes had repented and returned to God, as the *chief fathers of Judah and Benjamin did, and the priests and Levites*, Ezra i. 5. they should have fared as those two tribes did, but they forfeited the benefit of this glorious prophecy by sin. However, we believe it has its designed accomplishment in the establishment and enlargement of the gospel church, and the happy settlement of all those who are Israelites indeed, in the sure and sweet enjoyment of the privileges of the new covenant, in which there is enough for all, and enough for each.

4. That every tribe in this visionary distribution had its particular lot assigned it by a divine appointment; for it was never the intention of the gospel to pluck up the hedge of property, and lay all in common; it was in a way of charity, not of legal right, that the first Christians had all things common, *Acts ii. 44.* many precepts of the gospel suppose that every man should *know his own*. And we must not only acknowledge but acquiesce in the hand of God appointing us our lot, and be well pleased with it, believing it fittest for us. *He shall choose our inheritance for us*, *Psal. xlvii. 4.*

5. That the tribes lay *contiguous*; by the border of one tribe was the portion of another, all on a row, in exact order, so that like stones in an arch they fixed and strengthened, and wedged in one another. *Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren thus to dwell together!* It was a figure of the communion of churches and saints under the gospel government; thus, tho' they are *many*, yet they are *one*, and should hold together in holy love, and mutual assistance.

6. That Reuben which before lay at a distance beyond Jordan, now lies next to Judah, and next but one to the sanctuary; for the scandal he lay under, for which he was told he *should not excel*, began by this time to wear off. What has turned to the reproach of any person or people, ought not to be remembered for ever, but should at length be kindly forgotten.

7. That the sanctuary was in the *midst* of them; there were seven tribes to the north of it, and the Levites, the princes and the cities portion, with that of five tribes more, to the south of it; so that it was, as it ought to be, in the *heart of the kingdom*, that it might diffuse its benign influences to the whole, and might be the centre of their unity. The tribes that lay most remote from each other, would meet there in a mutual acquaintance and fellowship. Those of the same parish, or congregation, tho' dispersed, and having no occasion otherwise to know each other, yet by meeting stately to worship God together, should have their hearts knit to each other in holy love.

8. That where the sanctuary was, the priests were; *for them, even for the priests, shall this holy oblation be*, *ver. 10.* As on the one hand this speaks honour and comfort to ministers, that what

is given for their support and maintenance is reckoned a *holy oblation to the Lord*; so it speaks their duty, which is, That since they are appointed and maintained for the service of the sanctuary, they ought to *attend continually to this very thing*; to reside on their cures; those that *live upon* the altar must *serve at the altar*, not take the wages to themselves, and devolve the work upon others; but how can they *serve the altar*, his altar they live upon, if they do not *live near it*?

9. Those priests had the priests share of these lands that had approved themselves faithful to God in times of trial, *ver. 11.* *It shall be for the sons of Zadok*, who it seems had *signalized* themselves in some critical juncture, and *went not astray* when the *children of Israel*, and other the *Levites* went astray. God will put honour upon them, and hath special favours in reserve for them who keep their integrity in times of general apostasy. They are *swimming upwards*, and so they will find at last, that are *swimming against the stream*.

10. The land which was appropriated to the ministers of the sanctuary might by no means be alienated. It was in the nature of the *first fruits of the land*, and was therefore *holy to the Lord*; and tho' the priests and Levites had both the use of it, and the inheritance of it to them and their heirs, yet they might not *sell it or exchange it*, *ver. 14.* It is sacrilege to convert that to other uses which is dedicated to God.

11. The land allotted for the city and its suburbs is called a *profane place*, *ver. 15.* Or *common*; not but that the city was a *holy city*, above other cities, for the Lord was there, but in comparison with the sanctuary it was a *profane place*. Yet it is too often true in the worst sense, that great cities, even those that like this, have the sanctuary near them, are *profane places*, and it ought to be sadly lamented. It was the complaint of old, *From Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land*, *Jer. xxiii. 15.*

12. The city is made to be exactly four square, and the suburbs extending themselves equally on all sides, as the Levites cities did in the first division of the land, *ver. 16, 17.* which never being literally fulfilled in any city, intimates that it is to be understood *spiritually* of the beauty and stability of the gospel church, that *city of the living God*, which is formed according to the wisdom and counsel of God, and is made firm and immovable by his promise.

13. Whereas before, the inhabitants of Jerusalem were principally of Judah and Benjamin in whose tribe it lay, now the head city lies not in the particular lot of any of the tribes, but *they that serve the city*, and bear office in it, *shall serve it out of all the tribes of Israel*, *ver. 19.* The most eminent men must be picked out of *all the tribes of Israel*, for the service of the city, because many eyes were upon it, and there was great resort to it from all parts of the nation, and from other nations. They that *live in the city* are said to serve the city, for wherever we are we must study to be serviceable to the place, some way or other, according as our capacity is. They must not *come out of the tribes of Israel* to the city to take their ease, and enjoy their pleasures, but to *serve the city*, to do all the good they can there, and in so doing, they would have a good influence upon the country too.

14. Care was taken that those who applied themselves to publick business in the city, as well as in the *sanctuary*, should have an honourable comfortable maintenance; lands are appointed, *the increase whereof shall be food unto them that serve the city*, *ver. 18.* Who goes a warfare at his own charges? Magistrates that attend the service of the state, as well as ministers that attend the service of the church, should have all due encouragement and support in so doing; and *for this cause pay we tribute also*.

15. The prince had a lot for himself suited to the dignity of his high station, *ver. 21.* we took an account of it before, *chap. xlv.* He was seated near the sanctuary, where the *testimony* of Israel was, and near the city where the *thrones of judgment* were, that he might be a protection to both; and might see that the duty of both was carefully and faithfully done; and herein he was a minister of God for good to the whole community. Christ is the church's prince that defends it on every side, and creates a defence; nay he is himself a defence upon all its glory, and compasseth it with his favour.

Lastly, As Judah had his lot next the sanctuary on one side, so Benjamin had of all the tribes his lot nearest it on the other side; which honour was reserved for them who adhered to the house of David, and the temple at Jerusalem, when the other ten tribes went astray from both. It is enough if treachery and apostasy upon repentance be pardoned, but constancy and fidelity shall be rewarded and preferred.

30. ¶ And these are the goings out of the city on the north-side, four thousand and five hundred measures. 31. And the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel, three gates northward; one gate of Reuben, one gate of Judah, one gate of Levi. 32. And at the east-side four thousand and

and five hundred : and three gates ; and one gate of Joseph, one gate of Benjamin, one gate of Dan. 33. And at the south-side four thousand and five hundred measures : and three gates ; one gate of Simeon, one gate of Issachar, one gate of Zebulun. 34. At the west-side four thousand and five hundred, with their three gates ; one gate of Gad, one gate of Asher, one gate of Naphtali. 35. *It was round about eighteen thousand measures : and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.*

We have here a further account of *the city* that should be built for the metropolis of this glorious land, and to be the receptacle of those who should come from all parts to worship in the sanctuary adjoining. It is no where called Jerusalem, nor is the land which we have had such a particular account of the dividing of, any where called, *The land of Canaan*, for the old names are forgotten, to intimate that the *old things are done away, behold, all things are become new.*

Now concerning this city observe here,

1. The *measures* of its out-lets, and the grounds belonging to it, for its several conveniencies ; each way its appurtenances extended *four thousand and five hundred measures, eighteen thousand in all, ver. 35.* But what these measures were is uncertain ; it is never said in all this chapter, whether so many *reeds*, as our translation determines, by inserting that word, *ver. 8.* each reed containing six cubits and a span, *chap. xl. 5.* and why should the measurer appear with the measuring reed in his hand of that length, if he did not measure with *that*, except where it is expressly said, he measured by cubits ? Or whether, as others think, it is so many cubits, because those are mentioned, *chap. xlv. 2.* and *chap. xlvii. 3.* yet that makes me incline rather to think that where cubits are not mentioned, it must be intended so many lengths of the measuring reed. But those who understand it of so many cubits, are not agreed whether it be meant of the common cubit, which was half a yard, or the *geometrical cubit*, which for better expedition is supposed to be mostly used in surveying lands, which some say contained *six cubits* ; others about three cubits and a half, so making a thousand cubits the same with one thousand paces, that is, an *English mile.* But our being left at this uncertainty, is an intimation, that these things are to be understood spiritually, and that what is principally meant, is, That there is an exact and just proportion observed by infinite wisdom in modelling the gospel church, which tho' now we cannot discern, we shall when we come to heaven.

2. The *number* of its gates. It had twelve gates in all, three on each side ; which was very agreeable when it lay four square ; and these twelve gates inscribed to the twelve tribes. Because the city was to be served *out of all the tribes of Israel, ver. 19.* it was fit that each tribe should have its gate ; and Levi being here taken in, to keep to the number twelve, Ephraim and Manasseh are made one in Joseph, *ver. 32.* On the north-side were the gates of Reuben, Judah, and Levi, *ver. 31.* On the east, the gates of Joseph, Benjamin, and Dan, *ver. 32.* On the

south, the gates of Simeon, Issachar, and Zebulun, *ver. 33.* And on the west, the gates of Gad, Asher, and Naphtali, *ver. 34.* Conformable to this in St John's vision, the new Jerusalem, (for so the holy city is called there, tho' not here) has *twelve gates*, three of a side, and on them are written *the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, Rev. xxi. 12, 13.* Note, Into the church of Christ, both militant and triumphant, there is a free access by faith for all that come of every tribe, from every quarter. Christ has *opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers.* Whoever will may come and *take of the water of life, of the tree of life freely.*

3. The name given to this city ; *from that day*, when it shall be new erected according to this model, the name of it shall be, not as before, Jerusalem the *vision of peace*, but, which is the original of that, and more than equivalent to it, *Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is there, ver. 35.* This intimated,

1. That the captives, after their return, should have manifest tokens of God's presence with them, and his residence among them, both in his ordinances, and in his providences ; they should have no occasion to ask, as their fathers did, *Is the Lord among us, or is he not ?* For they shall see and say, That he is with them of a truth : And then tho' their troubles were many, and threatening, they were like the bush which burned, but was not consumed, because *the Lord was there.* But when God departed from their temple, when he said *Migramus hinc*, their house was soon left unto them desolate. Being no longer *his*, it was not much longer *theirs.*

2. That the gospel church should likewise have the presence of God in it, tho' not in the *Shechinah*, as of old, yet in a token of it, no less sure, that of his Spirit. Where the gospel is faithfully preached, gospel ordinances duly administered, and God worshipped in the name of Jesus Christ only, it may truly be said, *The Lord is there ;* for faithful is he that hath said it, and will be as good as his word, *Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.* *The Lord is there* in his church to rule and govern it, to protect and defend it, and graciously to accept and own his sincere worshippers, and to be *nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for.* This should engage us to keep close to the communion of saints, for *the Lord is there ;* and then whither else shall we go to mend our selves ? Nay, it is true of every good Christian, he dwells in God, and God in him ; whatever soul has in it a living principle of grace, it may be truly said, *The Lord is there.*

3. That the glory and happiness of heaven should consist chiefly in this, that *the Lord is there.* St John's representation of that blessed state doth indeed far exceed this, in many respects. That is all gold, and pearls, and precious stones ; it is much larger than this, and much brighter, for it *needs not the light of the sun.* But in making the presence of God the principal matter of its bliss, they both agree. There the happiness of the glorified saints is made to be, that *God himself shall be with them, Rev. xxi. 3.* that *he that sits on the throne shall dwell among them, Rev. vii. 15.* And here it is made to crown the bliss of this holy city, that *the Lord is there.* Let us therefore give all diligence to make sure to our selves a place in that city, that we may be *for ever with the Lord.*



A N
E X P O S I T I O N,
W I T H
P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S
Of the B O O K of
The Prophet D A N I E L.

THE book of Ezekiel left the affairs of Jerusalem under a doleful aspect, all in ruins, but with a joyful prospect of all in glory again. This of Daniel fitly follows: Ezekiel told us what was seen and what was foreseen by him in the former years of the captivity: Daniel tells us what was seen and foreseen in the latter years of the captivity, when God employs different hands, yet it is about the same work: And it was a comfort to the poor captives, that they had first one prophet among them, and then another to shew them how long, and a sign that God had not quite cast them off. Let us enquire:

1. Concerning this prophet; his Hebrew name was Daniel, which signifies the judgment of God; His Chaldean name was Belteshazzar. He was of the tribe of Judah, and as it should seem of the royal family; he was betimes eminent for wisdom, and piety: Ezekiel, his cotemporary, but much his senior, speaks of him as an oracle, when thus he upbraids the king of Tyre, with his conceitedness of himself. Thou art wiser than Daniel, Ezek. xxviii. 3. He is likewise there celebrated for success in prayer when Noah, Daniel, and Job, are reckoned as three men that had the greatest interest in heaven of any other, Ezek. xiv. 14. He begun betimes to be famous, and continued long so. Some of the Jewish Rabbins are loth to acknowledge him to be a prophet of the higher form, and therefore rank his book among the Hagiographa, not among the prophecies, and would not have their disciples pay much regard to it: One reason they pretend is, because he did not live such a mean mortified life as Jeremiah, and some other of the prophets did, but lived like a prince, and was a prime minister of state, whereas we find him persecuted as other prophets were, chap. vi. and mortifying himself as other prophets did, when he eat no pleasant bread, chap. x. 3. and fainting and sick when he was under the power of the Spirit of prophecy, chap. viii. 27. Another reason they pretend is, because he wrote his book in a heathen country, and there had his visions, and not in the land of Israel; but by the same reason, Ezekiel also must be expunged out of the roll of prophets. But the true reason is, he speaks so plainly of the time of the Messiah's coming, that the Jews cannot avoid the conviction of it, and therefore do not care to hear of it. But Josephus calls him one of the greatest of the prophets, nay, the angel Gabriel calls him a man greatly beloved. He lived long an active life in the courts and councils of some of the greatest monarchs the world ever had, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Darius; for we mistake if we confine the privilege of an intercourse with heaven to speculative men, or those that spend their time in contemplation; no, who was more intimately acquainted with the mind of God than Daniel, a courtier, a statesman, and a man of business? The Spirit as the wind blows where it lists. And if those that have much to do in the world plead that as an excuse for the seldomness and slowness of their converse with God, Daniel will condemn them. Some have thought he returned to Jerusalem, and was one of the masters of the Greek synagogue; but nothing of that appears in scripture, it is therefore generally concluded he died in Persia at Susa, where he lived to be very old.
2. Concerning this book; The first six chapters of it are historical, and are plain and easy, the six last are prophetic, and in them are many things dark and hard to be understood; which yet would be more intelligible if we had a more compleat history of the nations, and especially the Jewish nation, from Daniel's time to the coming of the Messiah. Our Saviour intimates the difficulty of apprehending the sense of Daniel's prophecies, when speaking of them, he saith, Let him that readeth understand, Mat. xxiv. 15. The first chapter, and the three first verses of the second chapter are in Hebrew, thence to the eighth chapter is in the Chaldee dialect; from thence to the end is in Hebrew. Mr Broughton observes,

observes, That as the Chaldeans were kind to Daniel, and gave cups of cold water to him when he requested it rather than the king's wine, God would not have them lose their reward, but made that language which they taught him, to have honour in his writings through all the world, unto this day. Daniel, according to his computation, continueth the holy story from the first surprizing of Jerusalem by the Chaldean Babel, when he himself was carried away captive, until the last destruction of it by Rome, the mystical Babel, for so far forward his predictions look, chap. ix. ult. The fables of Sufanna, and of Bel and the Dragon, in both which Daniel is made a party, are apocryphal stories, which we think we have no reason to give any credit to, they being never found in the Hebrew or Chaldee, but only in the Greek, nor ever admitted by the Jewish church. There are some, both of the histories, and of the prophecies of this book, that bear date in the latter end of the Chaldean monarchy, and others of both, that are dated in the beginning of the Persian monarchy: But both Nebuchadnezzar's dream which he interpreted, and his own visions, point at the Grecian and Roman monarchy, and very particularly at the Jews troubles under Antiochus, which it would be of great use to them to prepare for; as his fixing the very time for the coming of the Messiah, was to all them that waited for the consolation of Israel, and is to us for the confirming of our belief, That this is he who should come, and we are to look for no other.

CHAP. I.

This chapter gives us a more particular account of the beginning of Daniel's life, his original, and education, than we have of any other of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, began immediately with divine visions, but Daniel began with the study of human learning, and was afterwards honoured with divine visions; such variety of methods has God taken in training up men for the service of his church. We have here (1.) Jehoiakim's first captivity, ver. 1, 2. in which Daniel, with others of the seed royal, were carried to Babylon. (2.) The choice made of Daniel, and some other young men, to be brought up in the Chaldean literature, that they might be fitted to serve the government, and the provision made for them, ver. 3—7. (3.) Their pious refusal to eat of the portion of the king's meat, and their determining to live upon pulse and water, which having tried it, the master of the eunuchs allowed them to do, finding that it agreed very well with them, ver. 8—16. (4.) Their wonderful improvement above all their fellows in wisdom and knowledge, ver. 17—21.

IN the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. 2. And the LORD gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of GOD, which he carried into the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god. 3. ¶ And the king speak unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the kings seed, and of the princes; 4. Children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans. 5. And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years; that at the end thereof they might stand before the king. 6. Now among these were of the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 7. Unto whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abednego.

We have in these verses an account,

1. Of the first descent which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, made upon Judah and Jerusalem, in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, and his success in that expedition, ver. 1, 2. He besieged Jerusalem, soon made himself master of it, seized the king, took whom he pleased, and what he pleased away with him, and then left Jehoiakim to reign as tributary to him, which he did about eight years longer, but then rebelled, and it was his ruin. Now from this first captivity, most interpreters think the seventy years are

to be dated, tho' Jerusalem was not destroyed, nor the captivity completed till about nineteen years after. In that first year Daniel was carried to Babylon, and there continued the whole seventy years, see ver. 21. during which time all nations shall serve Nebuchadnezzar, and his son, and his son's son, Jer. xxv. 11. So that this one prophet saw within the compass of his own time, the rise, reign, and ruin of that monarchy; so that it was *res unius ætatis*; such short-lived things are the kingdoms of the earth, but the kingdom of heaven is everlasting. The righteous that see them taking root, shall see their fall, Job v. 3. Prov. xxix. 16. Mr Broughton observes the proportion of times in God's government since the coming out of Egypt; thence to their entering Canaan forty years, thence seven years to the dividing of the land, thence seven Jubilees to the first year of Samuel, in whom prophecy begun; thence to this first year of the captivity, seven seventies of years (490, ten Jubilees,) thence to the return one seventy; thence to the death of Christ seven seventies more, and from thence to the destruction of Jerusalem forty years.

2. The improvement he made of this success; he did not destroy the city or kingdom, but did that which just accomplished the first threatening of mischief by Babylon, it was that denounced against Hezekiah, for shewing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, Isa. xxxix. 6, 7. that the treasures and the children should be carried away, and if they had been humbled and reformed by this, hitherto the king of Babylon's power and success should have gone, but *no further*. If lesser judgments do the work, God will not send greater, but if not, he will heat the furnace seven times hotter. Let us see what was now done:

1. The vessels of the sanctuary were carried away; *part* of them, ver. 2. They fondly trusted to the temple to defend them, tho' they went on in their iniquity: And now to shew them the vanity of that confidence, the temple is first plundered; many of the holy vessels which used to be employed in the service of God, were taken away by the king of Babylon, those of them, it is likely, that were most valuable, and he brought them as trophies of victory to the *house of his god*, to whom, with a blind devotion, he gave the praise of his success, and having appropriated these vessels in token of gratitude to his god, he put them in the treasury of his temple. See the righteousness of God; his people had brought the images of *other gods* into his temple, and now he suffers the vessels of the temple to be carried into the treasuries of those *other gods*. Note, When men profane the vessels of the sanctuary with their sins, it is just with God to profane them by his judgments. It is likely the treasures of the king's house were rifled as was foretold, but particular mention is made of the taking away of the *vessels of the sanctuary*, because we shall find afterwards, that the profanation of them was it which filled up the measure of the Chaldeans iniquity, chap. v. 3. But observe, It was only *part* of them that went now, some were left them yet upon trial, to see if they would take the right course to prevent the carrying away of the remainder. See Jer. xxvii. 18.

2. The children and young men, especially such as were of noble or royal extraction, that were fightly and promising, and of good natural parts, were carried away. Thus was the iniquity of the fathers visited upon the children. These were taken away by Nebuchadnezzar: (1.) As *trophies*, to be made a shew of for the evidencing and magnifying of his success. (2.) As *hostages*, for the fidelity of their parents in their own land, who would be concerned to carry themselves well, that their children might have the better treatment. (3.) As a *seed to serve him*; he took them away to train them up for employments and preferments under him; either out of an unaccountable affection, which great men often have, to be attended by foreigners, tho' they be Blacks, rather than by those of their own

nation; or because he knew that there were no such witty, sprightly, ingenious young men to be found among his Chaldeans, as abounded among the youth of Israel; and if that were so, it was much for the honour of the Jewish nation, as of an uncommon *genius* above other people, and a fruit of the blessing: But it was a shame, that a people that had so much *wit*, should have so little *wisdom* and *grace*. Now observe,

1. The directions which the king of Babylon gave for the choice of these youths, *ver. 4.* They must not chuse such as were deformed in body, but comely and well-favoured, whose countenances were *indexes* of ingenuity and good humour; but that is not enough, they must be *skilful in all wisdom*, and *cunning*, or *well seen in knowledge*, and *understanding science*, that were quick and sharp, and could give a ready and intelligent account of their own country, and of the learning they had hitherto been brought up in. He chose such as were *young*, because they would be pliable and tractable, would forget their own people, and incorporate with the Chaldeans. He had an eye to what he designed them for, they must be such as had ability in them to *stand in the king's palace*, not only to attend his royal person, but to preside in his affairs. This is an instance of the policy of this rising monarch, now in the beginning of his reign, and was a good omen of his prosperity, that he was in care to raise up a succession of persons fit for publick business. He did not, like Ahasuerus, appoint them to chuse him out *young women*, for the service of his lusts, but *young men* for the service of his government. It is the interest of princes to have wise men employed under them; it is therefore their wisdom to take care for the finding out, and training up of such. It is the misery of this world, that so many that are fit for publick stations are buried in obscurity, and so many that are unfit for them, are preferred to them.

2. The care which he took concerning them:

(1.) For their education. He ordered that they should be taught *the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans*. They are supposed to be *wise and knowing* young men, and yet they must be further taught; *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will increase in learning*. Note, Those that would do good in the world when they are grown up, must learn when they are young. That is the *learning age*; if that time be lost, it will hardly be redeemed. What *unlawful arts* were used among the Chaldeans, Magick and Divination, it doth not appear that Nebuchadnezzar designed they should learn them; if he did, Daniel and his fellows would not defile themselves with them: Nay, we do not find that he ordered them to be taught the *religion* of the Chaldeans; by this it appears, he was at this time no bigot; if men were skilful and faithful, and fit for his business, it was not material to him what religion they were of, provided they had but *some* religion. They must be trained up in the language and laws of the country, in History, Philosophy, and Mathematicks; in the Arts of Husbandry, War, and Navigation; in such learning as might qualify them to serve their generation. Note, It is real service to the publick, to provide for the good education of youth.

(2.) For their maintenance. He provided for them *three years*, not only necessities, but dainties, for their encouragement in their studies; they had *daily provision of the king's meat and of the wine which he drank*, *ver. 5.* This was an instance of his generosity and humanity; though they were his captives; he considered their birth and quality, their spirit and genius, and treated them *honourably*, and studied to make their captivity easy to them. There is a respect owing to those who are well born and bred, when they are fallen into distress. With a *liberal education* there should be a *liberal maintenance*.

3. A particular account of Daniel and his fellows; they were of the *children of Judah*, the royal tribe, and probably of the house of David, which was grown a numerous family; and God told Hezekiah, That of the children that should *issue from him*, some should be taken and made eunuchs or chamberlains *in the palace of the king of Babylon*. The *prince of the eunuchs* changed the names of Daniel and his fellows, partly to shew his authority over them, and their subjection to him, and partly in token of their being *naturalized* and made Chaldeans. Their Hebrew names, which they received at their circumcision, had something of God or Jah in them; Daniel, *God is my judge*. Hananiah, *The grace of the Lord*; Mishael, *He that is the strong God*; Azariah, *The Lord is a help*: to make them forget the God of their fathers, the guide of their youth, they give them names that smell of the Chaldean idolatry; Belteshazzar signifies, the *keeper of the hid treasures of Bel*. Shadrach, *The inspiration of the sun*, which the Chaldeans worshipped; Meshach, of the goddess Shach, under which name Venus was worshipped. Abednego, *The servant of the shining fire*, which they worshipped also. Thus, tho' they would not force them from the religion of their fathers to that of their conquerors, yet they did what they could by fair means, insensibly to wean them from the former, and insil the latter into them. Yet see how comfortably they were provided for; tho' they suffered for their fathers sins, they were preferred for their own merits; and the land of their captivity was made more comfortable to them than the land of their nativity at this time would have been.

8. ¶ But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself. 9. Now GOD had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs. 10. And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat, and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king. 11. Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. 12. Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink. 13. Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants. 14. So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days. 15. And at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh, than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat. 16. Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink: and gave them pulse.

We observe here, very much to our satisfaction,

1. That Daniel was a favourite with the *prince of the eunuchs*, *ver. 9.* as Joseph was with the keeper of the prison: he had a *tender love* for him. No doubt, Daniel deserved it, and recommended himself by his ingenuity and sweetness of temper; he was *greatly beloved*, chap. ix. 23. and yet it is said here, it was God that brought him into favour with the *prince of the eunuchs*, for every one doth not meet with acceptance according to his merits. Note, The interest which we think we make for our selves, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift, and must ascribe to him the glory of it. Whoever are *in favour*, it is God that has brought them into favour; and it is by him that they find *good understanding*. Herein was again verified that word, *Psal. cvi. 6. He made them to be pitied of all those that carried them captives*. Let young ones know, that the way to be *acceptable*, is to be *tractable*, and *dutiful*.

2. That Daniel was still firm to his religion. They had changed his name, but they could not change his nature; whatever they pleased to call him, he still retained the spirit of an Israelite indeed. He would apply his mind as closely as any of them all to his books, and took pains to make himself master of *the learning and tongue of the Chaldeans*; but he was resolved he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat; he would not meddle with it, nor with the wine which he drank, *ver. 8.* And having communicated his purpose with the reasons of it to his fellows, they concurred in the same resolution, as appears, *ver. 11.* This was not out of sullenness or peevishness, or a spirit of contradiction, but from a principle of conscience. Perhaps it was not in it self unlawful for them to eat of the king's meat, or, to drink of his wine: But (1.) They were scrupulous concerning the meat, lest it should be sinful. Sometimes such meat would be set before them as was expressly forbidden by their law, as swines-flesh; or, they were afraid, lest it should have been offered in sacrifice to an idol, or blessed in the name of an idol. The Jews were distinguished from other nations very much by their meats, *Lev. xi. 45, 46.* and these pious young men being in a strange country, thought themselves obliged to keep up the honour of their being a *peculiar people*. Tho' they could not keep up their dignity as princes, they would not lose it as Israelites; for by that they most valued themselves. Note, When God's people are in Babylon, they have need to take special care that they *partake not in her sins*. Providence seemed to lay this meat before them; being captives, they must eat what they could get, and must not disoblige their masters; yet, if the command be against it, they must abide by that: tho' providence saith, *kill and eat*; conscience saith, *not so, Lord, for nothing common or unclean has come into my mouth*. (2.) They were jealous over themselves, lest, tho' it should not be sinful in it self, it should be an *occasion of sin* to them; lest, by indulging their appetites with these dainties, they should grow sinful and voluptuous, and in love with the pleasures of Babylon: they had learned David's prayer, *Let me not eat of their dainties*, *Psal. cxli. 4.* and Solomon's precept, *Be not desirous of dainties, for they are deceitful meat*, *Prov. xxiii. 3.* and accordingly they form their resolution. Note, It is very much the praise of all, and especially of young people, to be dead to the delights of sense, not to covet them, not to relish them, but to look upon them with an indifferency. Those that would excel in wisdom and piety, must learn betimes to *keep under the body, and bring it into subjection*. (3.) However, they thought it unreasonable now, when Jerusalem was in distress, and they themselves in captivity.

captivity. They had no heart to drink wine in bowls, so much were they grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Tho' they had royal blood in their veins, yet they did not think it proper to have royal dainties in their mouths when they were thus brought low. Note, It becomes us to be humble under humbling providences. *Call me not Naomi, call me Marah.* See the benefit of affliction; by the account Jeremiah gives of the princes and great men now at Jerusalem, it appears they were very corrupt and wicked, and defiled themselves with things offered to idols, while these young gentlemen that were in captivity would not defile themselves, no, not with their portion of the king's meat. How much better is it with those that retain their integrity in the depths of affliction, than with those that retain their iniquity in the heights of prosperity! Observe, The great thing that Daniel avoided, was defiling himself with the pollutions of sin; that is the thing we should be more afraid of than of any outward trouble. Daniel having taken up this resolution, he requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself, not only that he might not be compelled to do it, but that he might not be tempted to do it; that the bait might not be laid before him; that he might not see the portion appointed him of the king's meat, nor look upon the wine when it was red: it will be easier to keep the temptation at a distance, than to suffer it to come near, and then be forced to put a knife to our throat. Note, We cannot better improve our interest in any with whom we have found favour, than to make use of them to keep us from sin.

3. That God wonderfully owned him herein, when Daniel requested, that he might have none of the king's meat or wine set before him, the prince of the eunuchs objected, that if he and his fellows were not found in as good case as any of their companions, he should be in danger of having anger, and of losing his head, ver. 10.

Daniel, to satisfy him that there would be no danger of any ill consequence, desires the matter might be put to a trial. He applies himself further to the under-officer, Melzar, or the steward, *prove us for ten days*; during that time let us have nothing but pulse to eat, nothing but herbs and fruits, or parched pease, or lentils, and nothing but water to drink, and see how we can live upon that, and proceed accordingly, ver. 13. People will not believe the benefit of abstemiousness and a spare diet, nor how much it contributes to the health of the body, unless they try it. Trial was accordingly made; Daniel and his fellows lived for ten days upon pulse and water, hard fare for young men of gentle extraction and education, and which one would rather expect they should have indented against than petitioned for; but at the end of the ten days they were compared with the other children, and were found fairer and fatter in flesh, of a more healthful look, and a better complexion than all those which did eat the portion of the kings meat, ver. 15. This was in part a natural effect of their temperance, but it must be ascribed to the special blessing of God, which will make a little to go a great way; a dinner of herbs better than a stalled ox. By this it appears that man lives not by bread alone; pulse and water shall be the most nourishing food if God speak the word. See what it is to keep our selves pure from the pollutions of sin, it is the way to have that comfort and satisfaction which will be health to the navel, and marrow to the bones, while the pleasures of sin are rottenness to the bones.

4. That his master countenanced him. The steward did not force them to eat against their consciences, but as they desired, gave them pulse, and water, ver. 16. The pleasures of which they enjoyed, and we have reason to think, were not envied the enjoyment. Here is a great example of temperance, and contentment with mean things; and (as Epicurus said) "He that lives according to nature will never be poor, but he that lives according to opinion will never be rich." This wonderful abstemiousness of these young men in the days of their youth, contributed to the fitting of them, (1.) For their eminent services; hereby they kept their minds clear and unclouded, and fit for contemplation, and saved for the best employments a great deal both of time and thought; and thus they prevented those diseases which indispose men for the business of age, that owe their rise to the intemperances of youth. (2.) For their eminent sufferings. They that had thus enured themselves to hardship, and lived a life of self-denial and mortification, could the more easily venture upon the fiery furnace, and the den of lions, rather than sin against God.

17. ¶ As for these four children, GOD gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. 18. Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19. And the king communed with them: and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Michael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king. 20. And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired of them, he found

them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm. 21. And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

Concerning Daniel and his fellows, we have here,

1. Their great attainments in learning, ver. 17. They were very sober and diligent, and studied hard, and we may suppose their tutors, finding them of an uncommon capacity, took a deal of pains with them, but, after all, their achievements are ascribed to God only: it was he that gave them knowledge and skill, in all learning and wisdom, for every good and perfect gift is from above, from the Father of lights; it is the Lord our God that gives men power to get this wealth; the mind is furnished only by him that formed it. The great learning which God gave these four children was (1.) A balance for their losses; they had for the iniquity of their fathers been deprived of the honours and pleasures that would have attended their noble extraction; but to make them amends for that, God in giving them learning, gave them better honours and pleasures than those they had been deprived of. (2.) A recompence for their integrity; they kept to their religion, even in the minutest instances of it, and would not so much as defile themselves with the king's meat or wine, but became in effect Nazarites, and now God rewarded them for it with an eminency in learning; for God giveth to a man that is good in his sight, wisdom and knowledge, and joy with them, Eccl. ii. 26. To Daniel he gave a double portion, he had understanding in visions and dreams; he knew not how to interpret dreams, as Joseph, not by rules of art, such as are pretended to be given by the Oneirocriticks; but by a divine sagacity and wisdom which God gave him. Nay, he was endued with a prophetic spirit, by which he was enabled to converse with God, and to receive the notices of divine things in dreams and visions, Numb. xii. 6. According to this gift given to Daniel, we find him in this book all along employed about dreams and visions, interpreting or entertaining them; for as every one has received the gift, so shall he have an opportunity, and so should he have a heart to minister the same, 1 Pet. iv. 10.

2. Their great acceptance with the king. After three years spent in their education, (they being of some maturity, it is likely when they came, perhaps about twenty years old) they were presented to the king, with the rest that were of their standing, ver. 18. And the king examined them, and communed with them himself, ver. 19. He could do it, being a man of parts and learning himself, else he had not come to be so great. And he would do it; for it is the wisdom of princes in the choice of the persons they employ to see with their own eyes, to exercise their own judgment, and not trust too much to others representation. The king examined them not so much in the languages, in the rules of oratory or poetry, as in all matters of wisdom and understanding, the rules of prudence and true politics; he enquired into their judgment about the due conduct of human life, and publick affairs; not were they wits, but were they wise? and he found them to excel not only the young candidates for preferment that were of their own standing, but that they had more understanding than the ancients; than all their teachers, Psal. cxix. 99, 100. So far was the king from being partial to his own countrymen, to seniors, to those of his own religion, and of an established reputation, that he freely owned, that upon trial, he found those poor young captive Jews ten times wiser and better than all the magicians that were in all his realm, ver. 20. He was soon aware of something extraordinary in these young men; and, which gave him a surprising satisfaction, was soon aware that a little of their true divinity, was preferable to a great deal of the divination he had been used to. *What is the chaff to the wheat!* the magicians rods to Aaron's! There was no comparison between them; these four young students were better, were ten times better than all the old practitioners, put them all together, that were in all his realm, and we may be sure they were not a few. This contempt did God pour upon the pride of the Chaldeans, and this honour did he put upon the low estate of his own people: and thus did he make not only these persons, but the rest of their nation for their sakes, the more respected in the land of their captivity. Lastly, This judgment being given concerning them, they stood before the king, ver. 19. They attended in the presence-chamber; nay, and in the council-chamber; for to see the king's face is the periphrasis of a privy-counsellor, Esth. i. 14. This confirms Solomon's observation, *Seekest thou a man diligent in his business?* sober and humble, he shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men. Industry is the way to preferment. How long the other three were about the court we are not told; but Daniel, for his part, continued to the first year of Cyrus, ver. 21: tho' not always alike in favour and reputation. He lived and prophesied after the first year of Cyrus, but that is mentioned to intimate, that he lived to see the deliverance of his people out of their captivity, and their return to their own land. Note, Sometimes God favours his servants that mourn with Zion in her sorrows, to let them live to see better times with the church, than they saw in the beginning of their days, and to share with her in her joys.

C H A P. II.

It was said, chap. i. 17. That Daniel had understanding in dreams; and here we have an early and eminent instance of it, which soon made him famous in the court of Babylon, as Joseph by the same means came to be so in the court of Egypt. This chapter is a history, but it is the history of a prophecy, by a dream and the interpretation of it. Pharaoh's dream, and Joseph's interpretation of it, related only to the years of plenty and famine, and the interest of God's Israel in them; but Nebuchadnezzar's dream here, and Daniel's interpretation of that, looks much higher, to the four monarchies, and the concerns of Israel in them, and the kingdom of the Messiah, which should be set up in the world upon the ruins of them. In this chapter we have (1.) The great perplexity that Nebuchadnezzar was put into by a dream which he had forgotten, and his command to the magicians to tell him what it was, which they could not pretend to do, ver. 1—11. (2.) Orders given for the destroying of all the wise men of Babylon, and of Daniel among the rest, with his fellows, ver. 12—15. (3.) The discovery of this secret to him in answer to prayer, and the thanksgiving he offered up to God thereupon, ver. 16—23. (4.) His admission to the king, and the discovery he made to him both of his dream, and of the interpretation of it, ver. 24—45. (5.) The great honour which Nebuchadnezzar put upon Daniel, in recompence for this service, and the preferment of his companions with him, ver. 46—49.

1. **A**ND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2. Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the forcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams: so they came, and stood before the king. 3. And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream. 4. Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation. 5. The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghil. 6. But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts, and rewards, and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof. 7. They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it. 8. The king answered and said, I know of certainty, that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9. But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof. 10. ¶ The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the kings matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11. And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh. 12. For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13. And the decree went forth, that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

We meet with a great difficulty in the date of this story; it is said to be in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 1. Now Daniel was carried to Babylon in his first year, and it should seem he was three years under tutors and governors, before he was presented to the king, chap. i. 5. How then could this happen in the second year? Perhaps tho' three years were appointed for the education of other children, yet Daniel was so pregnant, that he was taken into business when he had been but one year at school, and so in the second year he became thus considerable. Some make it to be the second year after he began to reign alone, but the fifth or sixth year since he began to reign

in partnership with his father. Some read it, and in the second year, (*viz.* the second after Daniel and his fellows stood before the king) in the kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar, or in his reign, this happened; as Joseph in the second year after his skill in dreams shewed, expounded Pharaoh's, so Daniel in the second year, after he commenced master in that art, did this service. I would much rather take it some of these ways, than suppose, as some do, that it was in the second year after he had conquered Egypt, which was the thirty-sixth year of his reign, because it appears by what we meet with in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for wisdom, and prevalency in prayer long before that; and therefore this passage, or story, which shews how he came to be so eminent for both those, must be laid early in Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Now here we may observe,

1. The tofs that Nebuchadnezzar was in by reason of a dream which he had dreamed, but had forgotten; ver. 1. He dreamed dreams, i. e. a dream consisting of divers distinct parts, or which filled his head as much as if it had been many dreams. Solomon speaks of a multitude of dreams, strangely incoherent, in which there are divers vanities, Eccl. v. 7. This dream of Nebuchadnezzar's had nothing in the thing it self, but what might be paralleled in many a common dream, in which are often represented to men things as foreign as this here; but there was something in the impression it made upon him which carried with it an incontestable evidence of its divine original, and its prophetick significancy. Note, The greatest of men are not exempt from, nay, they lie most open to those cares and troubles of mind which disturb their repose in the night, while the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, and sound, and the sleep of the sober temperate man free from confused dreams; the abundance of the rich will not suffer them to sleep at all for care, and the excesses of gluttons and drunkards will not suffer them to sleep quietly for dreaming. But this here was not from natural causes; Nebuchadnezzar was a troubler of God's Israel, but God here troubled him, for he that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it. He had his guards about him, but they could not keep trouble from his spirit. We know not the uneasinesses of many that live in great pomp, and one would think in pleasure too. We look into their houses, and are tempted to envy them, but could we look into their hearts, we should pity them rather. All the treasures, and all the delights of the children of men which this mighty monarch had the command of, could not procure him a little repose, when by reason of the trouble of his mind his sleep brake from him: but God giveth his beloved sleep, who return to him as their rest.

2. The trial that he made of his magicians and astrologers, whether they could tell him what his dream was which he had forgotten. They were presently sent for to shew the king his dreams, ver. 2. There are many things which we retain the impressions of, and yet have lost the images of the things: tho' we cannot tell what the matter was, we know how we were affected with it; so it was with this king. His dream was slipped out of his mind, and he could not possibly recollect it, but was confident he should know it if he heard it again. God ordered it so that Daniel might have the more honour, and in him the God of Daniel. Note, God sometimes serves his own purposes by putting things out of mens minds, as well as by putting things into their minds. The magicians, it is likely, were proud of their being sent for into the king's bed-chamber, to give him a taste of their office, not doubting but it would be for their honour. He tells them, he had dreamed a dream, ver. 3. They speak to him in the Syriack tongue, which was then the same with the Chaldee, but now they differ much. And from henceforward Daniel useth that language, or dialect of the Hebrew, for the same reason that those words, Jer. x. 11. are in that language, because designed to convince the Chaldeans of the folly of their idolatry, and to bring them to the knowledge and worship of the true and living God; which the stories of these chapters have a direct tendency to: but chap. viii. and forward, being intended for the comfort of the Jews, is written in their peculiar language. They in their answer complimented the king with their good wishes, desired him to tell his dream, and undertook with all possible assurance to interpret it, ver. 4. But the king insisted upon it, that they must tell him the dream it self; because he had forgotten it, and could not tell it them. And if they could not do this, they should all be put to death as deceivers, ver. 5. themselves cut to pieces, and their houses made a dunghil. If they could, they should be rewarded and preferred, ver. 6. And they know as Balaam did concerning Balak, that he is able to promote them to great honour, and give them that wages of unrighteousness, which like him they love so dearly: no question therefore they will do their utmost to gratify the king; if they do not, it is not for want of good will, but for want of power; providence so ordering it, that the magicians of Babylon might now be as much confounded and put to shame, as of old the magicians of Egypt had been, that how much soever his people were both in Egypt and Babylon vilified and made contemptible, his oracles might in both be magnified and made honourable, by the silencing of those that set up in competition with them. The magicians having reason on their side, insist upon it, that the king must tell them the dream, and

and then if they do not tell him the interpretation of it, it is their fault, *ver. 7.* But arbitrary power is deaf to reason; the king falls into a passion, gives them a parcel of hard words, and, without any colour of reason, suspects that they could tell him, but would not; and instead of upbraiding them with impotency, and the deficiency of their art, as he might justly have done, he charges them with a combination to affront him, *Ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me: how unreasonable and absurd is this imputation!* if they had undertaken to tell him what his dream was, and had imposed upon him with a sham, he might have charged them with *lying and corrupt words*, but to say this of them, when they honestly confessed their own weakness, only shews what senseless things indulged passions are; and how apt great men are to think it is their prerogative to pursue their humour in defiance of reason and equity, and all the dictates of both. When the magicians begged of him to tell them the dream, tho' the request was highly rational and just, he tells them they did but dally with him to *gain time*, *ver. 8. till the time be changed*, *ver. 9.* either till the king's desire to know his dream be over, and he grown indifferent whether he be told it or no, tho' now he is *so hot upon it*. Or, till they may hope he has so perfectly forgot his dream, (the remaining shades of which are slipping from him apace as he catcheth at them) that they may tell him what they please, and make him believe it was *his dream*, and when the thing which is *going*, is quite *gone from him*, as it will be in a little time, he will not be able to disprove them. And therefore, without delay, they must tell him the dream. In vain do they plead, (1.) That there is *no man on earth* that can retrieve the king's dream, *ver. 10.* There are settled rules by which to discover what the meaning of the dream was, whether they will hold or no is the question. But never were any rules offered to be given by which to discover what the dream was; they cannot work unless they have something to *work upon*. They acknowledge that *the gods* may indeed *declare unto man what is his thought*, Amos iv. 13. for he *understandeth our thoughts afar off*, Psal. cxxxix. 2. what they *will be* before we think them, what they are when we do not regard them, and what they *have been* when we have forgot them. But those who can do this are gods that *have not their dwelling with flesh*, *ver. 11.* and it is they alone that can do this. As for men their *dwelling is with flesh*, the wisest and greatest of men are clouded with a veil of flesh, which quite obstructs and confounds all their acquaintance with spirits, and their powers and operations; but the gods that are themselves pure spirits know what is *in man*. See here an instance of the ignorance of these magicians, that they speak of *many gods*, whereas there is but *one*, and can be but *one infinite*; yet see their knowledge of that which even the light of nature teacheth, and the works of nature prove; that there is a God, who is a spirit, and perfectly knows the spirits of men and all their thoughts; so as it is not possible any man should. This confession of the divine omniscience is here extorted from these idolaters, to the honour of God, and their own condemnation, who, tho' they know there is a God in heaven, *to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secret is hid*, yet offered up their prayers and praises to dumb idols that have *eyes and see not, ears and hear not*. (2.) That there is no king on earth that would expect to require such a thing, *ver. 10.* This intimates, that they were *kings, lords and potentates*, not ordinary people, that the magicians had most dealings with, and at whose devotion they were, while the oracles of God, and the gospel of Christ, are dispensed to the poor. Kings and potentates have often required unreasonable things of their subjects, but they think never any required so unreasonable a thing as this, and therefore hope his imperial majesty will not insist upon it. But it is all in vain, when passion is in the throne, reason is under foot: he was *angry and very furious*, *ver. 12.* Note, It is very common for those that will not be convinced by reason, to be provoked and exasperated by it, and to push on with fury, what they cannot support with equity.

3. The doom passed upon all the magicians of Babylon, there is but *one decree for them all*, *ver. 9.* they all stand condemned without exception or distinction: the decree is gone forth, they must every man of them be slain, *ver. 13.* Daniel and his fellows (tho' they knew nothing of the matter) not excepted. See here (1.) What are commonly the unjust proceedings of arbitrary power. Nebuchadnezzar is here a tyrant in true colours, speaking death when he cannot speak sense, and treating those as traitors whose only fault is, that they would serve him but cannot. (2.) What is commonly the just punishment of pretenders. How unrighteous soever Nebuchadnezzar was in this sentence as to the ring-leaders in the imposture, God was righteous: they that imposed upon men in taking on them to do what they could not do, are now sentenced to death for not being able to do what they did not pretend to.

14. ¶ Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the kings guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon. 15. He answered and said to Arioch the kings captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch

made the thing known to Daniel. 16. Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation. 17. Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18. That they would desire mercies of the G O D of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19. ¶ Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision: then Daniel blessed the G O D of heaven. 20. Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of G O D for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. 21. And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. 22. He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23. I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the kings matter.

When the king sent for his wise men to tell them his dream, and the interpretation of it, *ver. 2.* it seems Daniel was not summoned to appear among them; the king, tho' he was highly pleased with him when he examined him, and thought him *ten times wiser* than the rest of his wise men, yet forgot him when he had most occasion for him; and no wonder, when all was done *in a heat*, and nothing with a cool and deliberate thought. But providence so ordered it, that the magicians being nonplussed, might be the more taken notice of, and so the more glory might redound to the God of Daniel. But tho' Daniel had not the honour to be consulted with the rest of the wise men, contrary to all law and justice, by an undistinguishing sentence he stands condemned with them, and till he has notice brought him to prepare for execution, knows nothing of the matter. How miserable is the case of those who live under an arbitrary government as this of Nebuchadnezzar's? how happy we, whose lives are under the protection of the law and methods of justice, and lie not thus at the mercy of a peevish and capricious prince?

We have found already in Ezekiel, that Daniel was famous both for prudence and prayer; as a *prince* he had *power with God and man*; by *prayer* he had power with God, by *prudence* he had power with man, and in both he *prevailed*: Thus did he *find favour and good understanding* in the sight of both. And in these verses we have a remarkable instance of both.

1. Daniel by *prudence* knew how to *deal with men*, and he *prevailed* with them. When Arioch the captain of the guard, that was appointed to slay all the wise men of Babylon, the whole college of them, seized Daniel, (for the sword of tyranny, like the sword of war, *devours one as well as another*) he *answered with counsel and wisdom*, *ver. 14.* he did not fall into a passion, and reproach the king as unjust and barbarous, much less did he contrive how to make resistance, but mildly asked *why is the decree so hasty?* *ver. 15.* And whereas the rest of the wise men had insisted upon it, that it was utterly impossible for him ever to have his demand gratified, which did but make him more outrageous, Daniel undertakes, if he may but have a little time allowed him, to give the king all the satisfaction he desired, *ver. 16.* The king being now sensible of his error in not sending for Daniel sooner, whose character he began to recollect, was soon prevailed with to respite the judgment, and make trial of Daniel. Note, The likeliest method to turn away wrath, even the wrath of a king, which is as the messenger of death, is by a *soft answer*; by that *yielding* which *pacifies great offences*; thus, tho' *where the word of a king is, there is power*, yet even that word may be repelled, and that so as to be repealed; and so some read it here, *ver. 14. Then Daniel returned, and stayed the counsel and edict, through Arioch, the kings provost-marshal.*

2. Daniel knew how by prayer to converse with God, and he found favour with him, both in petition, and in thanksgiving, which are the two principal parts of prayer. Observe,

(1.) His humble petition of this mercy; that God would discover to him what was the king's dream, and the interpretation of it. When he had gained time, he did not go to consult with the rest of the wise men, whether there was any thing in their art, in their books, that might be of use in this matter, but *went to his house*, there to be alone with his God, for from him alone, who is the Father of lights, he expected this great gift.

Observe, (1.) He did not only pray for this discovery himself, but he engaged his companions to pray for it too. He *made the thing known* to them, who had been all along his bosom-friends and associates, *that they would desire mercy of God concerning this*

secret, ver. 17, 18. tho' Daniel was probably their senior, and every way excelled them, yet he engaged them as partners with him in this matter. *Vis unita fortior.* See *Eph. iv. 16.* Note, Praying friends are valuable friends; and it is good to have an intimacy with, and an interest in, those that have fellowship with God, and an interest at the throne of grace. And it well becomes the greatest and best of men to desire the assistance of the prayers of others for them. St Paul often bespeaks his friends to pray for him. Thus we must shew that we put a value upon our friends, upon prayer, upon their prayers.

(2.) He was particular in this prayer, but had an eye to, and a dependence upon, the general mercy of God. That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret, ver. 18. We ought in prayer to look up to God as the God of heaven, a God above us, and that has dominion over us, to whom we owe adoration and allegiance, a God of power, who can do every thing: Our Saviour has taught us to pray to God as our Father in heaven. And whatever good we pray for, our dependence must be upon the mercies of God for it, and an interest in those mercies we must desire; we can expect nothing by way of recompence for our merits, but all as the gift of God's mercies. They desired mercy concerning this secret. Note, Whatever is the matter of our care, must be the matter of our prayer; we must desire mercy of God concerning this thing and the other thing, that occasions us trouble and fear. God gives us leave to be humbly free with him, and in prayer to enter into the detail of our wants and burthens. Secret things belong to the Lord our God, and therefore, if there be any mercy we stand in need of that concerns a secret, to him we must apply ourselves; and tho' we cannot in faith pray for miracles, yet we may in faith pray to him who has all hearts in his hand, and who in his providence does wonders without miracles, for the discovery of that which is out of our ken, and the obtaining of that which is out of our reach, as far as is for his glory and our good, believing that to him nothing is hid, nothing is hard.

(3.) Their plea with God was, the imminent peril they were in; they desired mercy of God in this matter, that so Daniel and his fellows might not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon, that the righteous might not be destroyed with the wicked. Note, When the lives of good and useful men are in danger, it is time to be earnest with God for mercy for them, as for Peter in prison, *Acts xii. 5.*

(4.) The mercy which Daniel and his fellows prayed for, was bestowed. The secret was revealed unto Daniel in a night vision, ver. 19. Some think he dreamed the same dream when he was asleep that Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed; it should rather seem, that when he was awake, and continuing instant in prayer, and watching in the same, the dream itself, and the interpretation of it was communicated to him by the ministry of an angel, abundantly to his satisfaction. Note, The effectual fervent prayer of righteous men availeth much. There are mysteries and secrets which by prayer we are let into; with that key the cabinets of heaven are unlocked, for Christ hath said, Thus knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

2. His grateful thanksgiving for this mercy, when he had received it. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven, ver. 19. He did not stay till he had told it to the king, and seen whether he would own it to be his dream, or no, but is confident it is so, and that he has gained his point, and therefore immediately turns his prayers into praises: As he had prayed in a full assurance that God would do this for him, so he gave thanks in a full assurance that he had done it; and in both he had an eye to God as the God of heaven. His prayer was not recorded, but his thanksgiving is. Observe,

1. The honour he gives to God in his thanksgiving, which he studies to do in a great variety and copiousness of expression. Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever. There is that for ever in God which is to be blessed and praised, it is unchangeably and eternally in him. And it is to be blessed for ever and ever; as the matter of praise is God's eternal perfection, so the work of praise shall be everlastingly in the doing. (1.) He gives to God the glory of what he is in himself; wisdom and might are his. Wisdom and courage: So some. Whatever is fit to be done he will do; whatever he will do, he can do, he dares do, and he will be sure to do it in the best manner, for he has infinite wisdom to design and contrive, and infinite power to execute and accomplish: with him is strength and wisdom, which in men are oft parted.

(2.) He gives him the glory of what he is to the world of mankind. He has an universal influence and agency upon all the children of men, and all their actions and affairs. Are the times changed? Is the posture of affairs altered? Doth every thing lie open to mutability? It is God that changeth the times and the seasons, and the face of them: No change comes to pass by chance, but according to the will and counsel of God: Are those that were kings removed and deposed? Do they abdicate? Are they laid aside? It is God that removes kings; are the poor raised out of the dust? to be set among princes? It is God that setteth up kings; and the making and unmaking of kings is a flower of his crown who is the fountain of all

power, king of Kings, and Lord of lords. Are there men that excel others in wisdom, philosophers and statesmen, that think above the common rate, contemplative, penetrating men? it is God that gives wisdom to the wise, whether they be so wise as to acknowledge it, or no, they have it not of themselves, but it is he that gives knowledge to them that know understanding; which is a good reason why we should not be proud of our knowledge, and why we should serve and honour God with it, and make it our business to know him. (3.) He gives him the glory of this particular discovery. He praiseth him,

(1.) For that he could make such a discovery, ver. 22. He revealeth the deep and secret things, which are hid from the eyes of all living; it was he that revealed to man what is true wisdom, when none else could, Job xxviii. 27, 28. It is he that reveals things to come to his servants the prophets; he doth himself perfectly discern and distinguish that which is most close, and most industriously concealed, for he will bring into judgment every secret thing, the truth will be evident in the great day. He knows what is in the darkness, and what is done in the darkness, for that hides not from him, Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12. The light dwells with him, and he dwells in the light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. and yet as to us he makes darkness his pavilion. Some understand it of the light of prophecy and divine revelation, which dwells with God, and is derived from him: For he is the Father of lights, of all lights, they are all at home in him.

(2.) For that he had made this discovery to him. Here he has an eye to God as the God of his fathers; for tho' the Jews were now captives in Babylon, yet they were beloved for their fathers sake. He praiseth God who is the fountain of wisdom and might, for the wisdom and might he had given him; wisdom to know this great secret, and might to bear the discovery. Note, What wisdom and might we have, we must acknowledge it to be God's gift. Thou hast made this known to me, ver. 23. What was hid from the celebrated Chaldeans that made the interpreting of dreams their profession, is revealed to Daniel, a captive Jew, a babe, much their junior. God would hereby put honour upon the spirit of prophecy then, when he was putting contempt upon the spirit of divination. Was Daniel thus thankful to God for making known that to him which was the saving of the life of him and his fellows? Much more reason have we to be thankful to him for making known to us the great salvation of the soul; to us, and not to the world, to us, and not to the wise and prudent.

2. The respect he puts upon his companions in this thanksgiving: Tho' it was by his prayers principally that this discovery was obtained, and to him that it was made, yet he owns their partnership with him; both in praying for it, it is what we desired of thee; and in enjoying of it, thou hast made known unto us the king's matter. Either they were present with Daniel when the discovery was made to him; or, as soon as he knew it, he told it them *εὐρηκα, εὐρηκα, I have found it, I have found it*, that they who had assisted him with their prayers, might assist him in their praises; his joining them with him, is an instance of his humility and modesty, which well becomes those that are taken into communion with God. Thus, St Paul sometimes joins Sylvanus, Timotheus, or some other minister with himself in the inscriptions to many of his epistles. Note, What honour God puts upon us, we should be willing that our brethren may share with us in.

24. ¶ Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation. 25. Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation. 26. The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof? 27. Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded, cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king; 28. But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar, what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; 29. (As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind, upon thy bed; what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets, maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30. But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me, for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their

their fakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.)

We have here the introduction to Daniel's declaring of the dream, and the interpretation of it:

1. He immediately bespoke the reversing of the sentence against the wise men of Babylon, *ver. 24.* He went with all speed to Arioch, to tell him his commission was now superseded, *Destroy not the wise men of Babylon.* Tho' there were those of them perhaps that deserved to die, as magicians, by the law of God, yet here, that which they stood condemned for, was not a crime worthy of death or of bonds; and therefore let them not die, and be *unjustly destroyed*, but let them live, and be *justly shamed*, as having been nonplussed, and unable to do that which a prophet of the Lord could do. Note, Since God shews common kindness to the evil and good, we should do so too, and be ready to save the lives even of bad men, *Matt. v. 45.* A good man is a common good: To Paul in the ship, God gave the souls of all that sailed with him; they were saved for his sake. To Daniel was owing the preservation of all the wise men, who yet rendered not according to the benefit done to them, *chap. iii. 8.*

2. He offered his service with great assurance to go to the king, and tell him his dream, and the interpretation of it; and was admitted accordingly, *ver. 24, 25.* Arioch brought him in haste to the king, hoping to ingratiate himself by introducing Daniel; he pretends he had *sought him* to interpret the king's dream, whereas really it was to execute upon him the king's sentence that he *sought him*. But courtiers business is every way to humour the prince, and make their own services acceptable.

3. He contrived as much as might be to reflect shame upon the magicians, and to give honour to God upon this occasion. The king owned it was a bold undertaking, and questioned whether he could make it good, *ver. 26.* *Art thou able to make known unto me the dream?* What! Such a babe in this knowledge, such a stripling as thou art, wilt thou undertake that which thy seniors despair of doing? The less likely it appeared to the king that Daniel should do this, the more God was glorified in enabling him to do it. Note, In transmitting divine revelation to the children of men, it has been God's usual way to make use of the *weak and foolish things* and persons of the world, and such as were *despised* and *despaired of* to confound the wise and mighty, that the excellency of the power might be of him, *1 Cor. i. 27, 28.* Daniel from this takes occasion,

(1.) To put the king out of conceit with his magicians, and soothsayers whom he had such great expectations from, *ver. 27.* *This secret they cannot shew to the king;* it is out of their power, the rules of their art will not reach to it: Therefore let not the king be angry with them for not doing that which they cannot do, but rather *despise* them, and cast them off because they cannot do it. Broughton reads it generally, *This secret no sages, astrologers, enchanters, or entrail-cookers can shew unto the king;* let not the king therefore consult them any more. Note, The experience we have of the inability of all creatures to give us satisfaction, should lessen our esteem of them, and lower our expectations from them. They are baffled in their pretensions, we are baffled in our hopes from them, hitherto they come and no further, let us therefore say to them as Job to his friends, *now ye are nothing;* miserable comforters are ye all.

(2.) To bring him to the knowledge of the one only living and true God; the God whom Daniel worshipped. Tho' they cannot find out the secret, let not the king despair of having it found out, for *there is a God in heaven that reveals secrets*, *ver. 28.* Note, The insufficiency of creatures should drive us to the all-sufficiency of the Creator. *There is a God in heaven*, and it is well for us there is, who can do that for us, and make known that to us which none on earth can, particularly the secret history of the work of redemption, and the secret designs of God's love to us therein; the mystery which was *hid from ages and generations;* divine revelation helps us out there, where human reason leaves us quite at a loss, and makes known that not only to kings, but to the poor of his world, which none of the philosophers or politicians of the heathens, with all their oracles and arts of divination to help them, could ever pretend to give us any light into, *Rom. xvi. 5, 26.*

4. He confirmed the king in his opinion, that the dream he was thus solicitous to recover the idea of, was really well worth enquiring after, that it was of great value, and of vast consequence; not a common dream, the idle disport of a ludicrous and luxuriant fancy, not worth remembering or telling again; but that it was a divine discovery, a ray of light darted to his mind from the upper world, relating to the great affairs and revolutions of this lower world. God in it made known to the king what shall be in the latter days, *ver. 28. i. e.* the times yet to come, reaching as far as the setting up of

Christ's kingdom in the world, which was to be in the latter days, *Heb. i. 1.* And again, *ver. 29.* *The thoughts which came into thy mind* were not the repetitions of what had been before, as our dreams usually are, *Omnia quæ sensu voluntur vota diurno tempore sopito reddit amica quies.* *Glaudian.* But they were predictions of what should come to pass hereafter, which he that *revealeth secrets makes known unto thee;* and therefore thou art in the right in taking the hint, and pursuing it thus. Note, Things that are to come to pass hereafter, are *secret things* which God only can reveal; and what he has revealed of those things, especially with reference to the *last days* of all, to the end of time, ought to be very seriously and diligently enquired into, and considered by every one of us. Some think the thoughts which are said to have come into the king's mind upon his bed, what should come to pass hereafter, were his own thoughts when he was awake: Just before he fell asleep, and dreamed this dream, he was musing in his own mind what would be the issue of his growing greatness, what his kingdom would hereafter come to, and so the dream was an answer to those thoughts. What discoveries God intends to make, he thus prepares men for.

5. He solemnly professeth, that he could not pretend to have merited from God the favour of this discovery, or to have obtained it by any sagacity of his own, *ver. 30.* *But as for me,* this secret is not found out by me, but is *revealed to me,* and that *not for any wisdom that I have more than any living,* to qualify me for the receiving of such a discovery. Note, It well becomes those whom God has *highly favoured* and *honoured*, to be very *humble* and *low* in their own eyes; to lay aside all opinion of their own *wisdom* and *worthiness*, that God alone may have all the praise of the good they are, and have, and do, and that all may be attributed to the freeness of his good will towards them, and the fulness of his good work in them. The secret was made known to him, not for his own sake, but (1.) For the sake of his people, for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king; for the sake of his brethren and companions in tribulation, who had by their prayers helped him to obtain this discovery, and so might be said to make known the interpretation; that their lives might be spared, that they might come into favour, and be preferred, and all the people of the Jews might fare the better in their captivity for their sakes. Note, Humble men will be always ready to think that what God doth for them and by them, is more for others sakes than for their own. (2.) For the sake of his prince, and some read the former clause in this sense, not for any wisdom of mine, but that the king may know the interpretation, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thine heart; that thou mightest have satisfaction given thee as to what thou wast before a considering of, and thereby instruction given thee how to carry it towards the church of God. God revealed this thing to Daniel, that he might make it known to the king: Prophets receive that they may give; that the discoveries made them, may not be lodged with themselves, but communicated to the persons themselves that are concerned.

31. ¶ Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image: this great image whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee, and the form thereof was terrible. 32. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33. His legs of iron, his feet part of iron, and part of clay. 34. Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer-threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. 36. This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37. Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all: thou art this head of gold. 39. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. 40. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces, and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces, and bruise. 41. And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters clay,

clay, and part of iron : the kingdom shall be divided, but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42. And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay ; so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43. And whereas thou sawest iron mixt with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men : but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay. 44. And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold ; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter : and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Daniel here gives full satisfaction to Nebuchadnezzar, concerning his dream and the interpretation of it. That great prince had been kind to this poor prophet, in his maintenance and education ; he had been brought up at the king's cost, preferred at court, and the land of his captivity had hereby been made much easier to him than to others of his brethren : And now the king is abundantly repaid for all the expence he had been at upon him ; and for receiving this prophet, though not in the name of a prophet, he had a prophet's reward. Such a reward as a prophet only could give ; and for which that wealthy, mighty, prince was now glad to be beholden to him. Here is,

1. The dream itself, ver. 31. 45. Nebuchadnezzar perhaps was an admirer of statues, and had his palace and gardens adorned with them ; however, he was a worshipper of images, and now behold a great image is set before him in a dream ; which might intimate to him what the images were which he bestowed so much cost upon, and paid such respect to, they were meer dreams. The creatures of fancy might do as well to please the fancy. By the power of imagination, he might shut his eyes and represent to himself what forms he thought fit, and beautify them at his pleasure, without the expence and trouble of sculpture. This was the image of a man, erect, it stood before him, as a living man ; and because those monarchies which were designed to be represented by it were admirable in the eyes of their friends, the brightness of this image was excellent ; and because they were formidable to their enemies, and dreaded by all about them, the form of this image is said to be terrible, both the features of the face, and the postures of the body made it so. But that which was most remarkable in this image, was the different metals, of which it was composed. The head of gold, the richest and most durable metal ; the breast and arms of silver, the next to it in worth ; the belly and sides or thighs, of brass ; the legs of iron, still baser metals ; and lastly the feet, part of iron and part of clay. See what the things of this world are ; the further we go in them the less valuable they appear : In the life of man youth is a head of gold, but it grows less and less worthy of our esteem ; and old age is half clay ; a man is then as good as dead. It is so with the world ; later ages degenerate : The first age of the Christian church, of the reformation, was a head of gold, but we live in an age that is iron and clay. Some allude to this in the description of an hypocrite, whose practice is not agreeable to his knowledge. He has a head of gold, but feet of iron and clay ; knows his duty but doth it not. Some observe, That in Daniel's visions the monarchies were represented by four beasts, chap. vii. for he looked upon that wisdom from beneath, by which they were turned to be earthly and sensual, and a tyrannical power, to have more in it of the beast than of the man, and so the vision agreed with his notions of the thing : But to Nebuchadnezzar, a heathen prince, they were represented by a gay and pompous image of a man, for he was an admirer of the kingdoms of this world, and the glory of them. To him the sight was so charming that he was impatient to see it again.

But what became of this image ? The next part of the dream shews it us calcined, and brought to nothing. He saw a stone cut out of the quarey by an unseen power, without hands, and this stone fell upon the feet of the image that were of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces ; and then the image must fall of course, and so the gold and silver and brass and iron were all broken to pieces together, and beaten so small that they became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and there was not to be found any the least remains of them ; but the stone cut out of the mountain became itself a great mountain and filled the earth. See how God can bring about great effects by weak and unlikely causes ; when he pleaseth a little one shall become a thousand. Perhaps the destruction of this image of gold and silver and brass and iron might be intended to signify the abolishing of idolatry out of the world in due time. The idols of the heathen are silver

and gold, as this image was, and they shall perish from off the earth, and from under these heavens, Jer. x. 11. Isa. ii. 18. And whatever power destroys idolatry is in the ready way to magnify, and exalt itself ; as this stone when it had broke the image to pieces, became a great mountain.

2. The interpretation of this dream. Let us now see what is the meaning of this. It was from God, and therefore from him, it is fit we take the explication of it. It should seem Daniel had his fellows with him, and speaks for them as well as for himself when he saith, we will tell the interpretation, ver. 36. Now,

1. This image represented the kingdoms of the earth, that should successively bear rule among the nations, and have influence on the affairs of the Jewish church. The four monarchies were not represented by four distinct statues, but by one image, because they were all of one and the same spirit and genius, and all more or less against the church : It was the same power only lodged in four several nations, the two former lying eastward of Judea, the two latter westward.

1. The head of gold signified the Chaldean monarchy, which is now in being, ver. 37, 38. Thou, O king, art, or rather shalt be, a king of kings ; a universal monarch, to whom many kings and kingdoms shall be tributaries ; or thou art the highest of kings, on earth at this time ; as a servant of servants is the meanest servant ; thou dost out-shine all other kings. But let him not attribute his elevation to his own politicks, or fortitude ; no, it is the God of heaven that has given thee a kingdom, power, and strength and glory, a kingdom that exercises great authority, stands firm, and shines bright, acts by a puissant army with an arbitrary power.

Note, The greatest of princes have no power but what is given them from above. The extent of his dominion is set forth, ver. 38. that wheresoever the children of men dwell, in all the nations of that part of the world he was ruler over them all, over them and all that belonged to them, all their cattle, not only those which he had a property in, but those that were *feræ naturæ*, the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the heaven : He was lord of all the woods, forests, and chafes, and none were allowed to hunt or fowl, without his leave. Thus thou art this head of gold ; Thou and thy son and thy son's son for seventy years ; compare this with Jer. xxv. 9, 11. especially Jer. xxvii. 5, 6, 7. There were other powerful kingdoms in the world at this time, as that of the Scythians, but it was the kingdom of Babylon that reigned over the Jews, and that began the government which continued in the succession here described till Christ's time. It is called a head for its wisdom and eminency, and absolute power, a head of gold for its wealth, Isa. xiv. 4. it was a golden city. Some make this monarchy to begin in Nimrod, and so bring into it all the Assyrian kings, about fifty monarchs in all, and compute that it lasted above sixteen hundred years. But it had not been so long a monarchy of such vast extent and power as is here described, nor any thing like it : Therefore others make only Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, and Belshazzar, to belong to this head of gold, and a glorious high throne they had, and perhaps exercised a more despotick power than any of the kings that went before them. Nebuchadnezzar reigned forty five years current, Evil-merodach twenty three years current, and Belshazzar three. Babylon was their metropolis, and Daniel was with them upon the spot during the seventy years.

2. The breast and arms of silver, signified the monarchy of the Medes and Persians ; of which the king is told no more but this, there shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, ver. 39. not so rich, powerful, or victorious. This kingdom was founded by Darius the Mede, and Cyrus the Persian, in alliance with each other, and therefore represented by two arms, meeting in the breast. Cyrus was himself a Persian by his father, a Mede by his mother. Some reckon that this second monarchy lasted an hundred and thirty years, others two hundred and four years. The former computation agrees best with the scripture chronology.

3. The belly and thighs of brass signified the monarchy of the Grecians, founded by Alexander, who conquered Darius Codomannus, the last of the Persian emperors. This is the third kingdom of brass inferior in wealth and extent of dominion to the Persian monarchy, but in Alexander himself it shall by the power of the sword bear rule over all the earth, for Alexander boasted, That he had conquered the world, and then set down and wept because he had not another world to conquer.

4. The legs and feet of iron signified the Roman monarchy. Some make this to signify the latter part of the Grecian monarchy, the two empires of Syria and Egypt, the former governed by the family of the Seleucidæ, from Seleucus, the latter by that of the Lagidæ from Ptolemæus Lagus ; these they make the two legs, and feet of this image ; Grotius, and Junius, and Broughton, go this way. But it has been the more received opinion, That it is the Roman monarchy that is here intended ; because it was in the time of that monarchy, and when it was in its height that the kingdom of Christ was set up in the world by the preaching of the everlasting gospel. The Roman kingdom was strong as iron, ver. 40. witness the prevalency of that kingdom against all that contended with it for many ages. That kingdom broke in pieces the Grecian empire, and afterwards quite destroyed the nation

nation of the Jews, *ver. 46.* Towards the latter end of the Roman monarchy, it grew very weak, branched into ten kingdoms, which were as the toes of these feet. Some of which were weak as clay, others strong as iron, *ver. 42.* Endeavours were used to unite and cement them, for the strengthening of the empire, but in vain; *they shall not cleave one to another, ver. 43.* This empire divided the government for a long time between the senate and the people, the nobles and the commons, but they did not intirely coalesce; there were civil wars between Marius and Sylla, Cæsar and Pompey, whose parties were as *iron and clay.* Some refer this to the declining times of that empire, when for the strengthening of the empire against the irruptions of the barbarous nations, the branches of the royal family intermarried, but the politicks had not the desired effect, when the day of the fall of that empire came.

2. The stone cut out without hands represented the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which should be set up in the world in the time of the Roman empire, and upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom in the kingdoms of the world. This is the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, for it should be neither raised nor supported by human power or policy, no visible hand should act in the setting of it up, but it should be done invisibly by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. This was the stone which the builders refused, because it was not cut out by their hands, but it is now become the head stone of the corner.

1. The gospel church is a kingdom, which Christ is the sole and sovereign monarch of; in which he rules by his word and Spirit, to which he gives protection and law, and from which he receives homage and tribute. It is a kingdom not of this world, and yet set up in it; it is the kingdom of God among men.

2. The God of heaven was to set up this kingdom, to give authority to Christ to execute judgment, to set him as king upon his holy hill of Zion, and to bring into obedience to him a willing people. Being set up by the God of heaven, it is often in the New Testament called the kingdom of heaven, for its original is from above, and its tendency is upwards.

3. It was to be set up in the days of these kings, the kings of the fourth monarchy; which there is particular notice taken of, Luke ii. 1. That Christ was born when by the decree of the emperor of Rome all the world was taxed, which was a plain indication that that empire was become as universal, as any earthly empire ever was. When these kings are contending with each other, and in all the struggles the contending parties each hope to find their own account, God will do his own work, and fulfil his own counsels. These kings are all enemies to Christ's kingdom, and yet it shall be set up in defiance of them.

4. It is a kingdom that knows no decay, is in no danger of destruction, and will not admit any succession or revolution. It shall never be destroyed by any foreign force invading it, as many other kingdoms are, fire and sword cannot waste it; the combined powers of earth and hell cannot deprive either the subjects of their prince, or the prince of his subjects; nor shall this kingdom be left to other people; as the kingdoms of the earth are: As Christ is a monarch that has no successor, for he himself shall reign for ever, so his kingdom is a monarchy that has no revolution. The kingdom of God was indeed taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, *Matth. xxi. 43.* But still it was Christianity that ruled, the kingdom of the Messiah: The Christian church is still the same, it is fixed on a rock, much sought against, but never to be prevailed against by the gates of hell.

5. It is a kingdom that shall be victorious over all opposition. It shall break in pieces and consume all those kingdoms, as the stone cut out of the mountain without hands brake in pieces the image, *ver. 44, 45.* The kingdom of Christ shall wear out all other kingdoms, shall out-live them, and flourish, when they are sunk with their own weight, and so wasted that their place knows them no more. All the kingdoms that appear against the kingdom of Christ shall be broken with a rod of iron as a potters vessel, *Psal. ii. 9.* And in the kingdoms that submit to the kingdom of Christ, tyranny and idolatry and every thing that is their reproach as far as the gospel of Christ gets ground, shall be broken. The day is coming when Jesus Christ shall have put down all rule, principality, and power, and have made all his enemies his footstool, and then this prophecy will have its full accomplishment, and not till then, *1 Cor. xv. 24, 25.* Our Saviour seems to refer to this, *Matth. xxi. 44.* where speaking of himself as the stone set at nought by the Jewish builders, he saith, *On whomsoever this stone shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

6. It shall be an everlasting kingdom. Those kingdoms of the earth that had broke in pieces all about them, yet at length it came to their turn to be in like manner broken; but the kingdom of Christ shall break other kingdoms in pieces, and shall itself stand for ever. His throne shall be as the days of heaven, his seed, his subjects, as the stars of heaven, not only so innumerable, but so immutable. Of the increase of Christ's government and peace, there shall be no end. The Lord shall reign for ever, not only to the end of time, but when time and days shall be no more, and God shall be all in all to eternity.

No. lxxi,

Daniel having thus interpreted the dream, to the satisfaction of Nebuchadnezzar, who gave him no interruption, so full was the interpretation that he had no question to ask, and so plain that he had no objection to make; he closes all with a solemn assertion, (1.) Of the divine original of this dream, *The great God* (so he calls him to express his own high thoughts of him, and to beget the like in the mind of this great king) he has made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter, which the god of the magicians could not do. And thus a full confirmation was given to that great argument which Isaiah had long before urged against idolaters, and particularly the idolaters of Babylon, when he challenged the gods they worshipped to shew things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods, *Isa. xli. 23.* and by this proved the God of Israel to be the true God, that he declares the end from the beginning, *Isa. xlii. 10.* (2.) Of the undoubted certainty of the things foretold by this dream. He who makes known these things is the same that has himself designed and determined them, and will by his providence effect them, and we are sure his counsel shall stand, and cannot be altered, and therefore the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure. Note, Whatever God has made known we may depend upon.

46. ¶ Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation, and sweet odours unto him. 47. The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. 48. Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wisemen of Babylon. 49. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

One might have expected that when Nebuchadnezzar was contriving to make his own kingdom everlasting, he should have been enraged at Daniel, who foretold the fall of it, and that another kingdom of another nature should be the everlasting kingdom; but instead of resenting it as an affront, he received it as an oracle, and here we are told what the expressions were of the impressions it made upon him.

1. He was ready to look upon Daniel as a little god. Though he saw him to be a man, yet from this wonderful discovery he had made both of his secret thoughts in telling him the dream, and of things to come in telling him the interpretation of it, he concluded that he had certainly a divinity lodged in him, worthy his adoration; and therefore he fell upon his face and worshipped Daniel, *ver. 46.* It was the custom of the country by prostration to give honour to kings, because they have something of a divine power in them, *I have said ye are gods.* And therefore this king, who had often received such veneration from others, now paid the like to Daniel, whom he supposed to have in him a divine knowledge; which he was so struck with an admiration of, that he could not contain himself, but forgot both that Daniel was a man, and that himself was a king. Thus did God magnify divine revelation, and make it honourable, extorting from a proud potentate such a veneration but for one glimpse of it. He worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation to him, and burn incense. Herein he cannot be justified, but may very well be excused when Cornelius was thus ready to worship Peter, and John the angel, who both knew better things. But though it is not here mentioned, yet we have reason to think that Daniel refused these honours that he paid him, and said as St Peter or Cornelius, *Stand up, I myself also am a man*; or, as the angel to St John, *see thou do it not*; for it is not said that the oblation was offered unto him though the king commanded it; or rather said it; for so the word is. He said in his haste, *Let an oblation be offered to him.* And that Daniel did say something to him which turned his eyes and thoughts another way, is intimated in what follows, *ver. 47.* The king answered Daniel. Note, It is possible for those to express a great honour for the ministers of God's word, who yet have no true love for the word. Herod feared John, and heard him gladly, and yet went on in his sins, *Mark vi. 20.*

2. He readily acknowledged the God of Daniel, to be the great God, the true God, the only living and true God: if Daniel will not suffer himself to be worshipped, he will (as Daniel, it is likely, directed him) worship God, by confessing, *ver. 47.* Of a truth your God is a God of gods: such a God as there is no other; above all gods in dignity, over all gods in dominion. He is a LORD of kings, from whom they derive their power, and to whom they are accountable; and he is both a discoverer and a revealer of secrets; what is most secret he sees, and can reveal; and what he has revealed, is what was secret, and which none but he could reveal, *1 Cor. ii. 10.*

3. He preferred Daniel; made him a *great man*, ver. 48. God made him a *great man* indeed, when he took him into communion with himself; a greater man than Nebuchadnezzar could make him; but because God had magnified him, therefore the king magnified him. Doth wealth make men *great*? The king gave him many great gifts, and he had no reason to refuse them, when they all put him into so much the greater capacity of doing good to his brethren in captivity. These gifts were grateful returns for the good services he had done, and not aimed at or indented for by him, as the rewards of divination were by Balaam. Doth power make a man *great*? He made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon; which, no doubt, had a mighty influence upon the other provinces; he made him likewise chancellor of the university, chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon, to instruct them whom he had thus out-done; and since they could not do what the king would have them do, they shall be obliged to do what Daniel would have them do. Thus it is fit the fool should be servant to the wise in heart. Seeing Daniel could reveal this secret, ver. 47. the king thus advanced him. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to advance and employ those that receive divine revelation, and are much conversant with it, that as Daniel here shewed himself to be well acquainted with the kingdom of heaven. Joseph like Daniel here was advanced in the court of the king of Egypt, for his interpreting of his dreams; and he called him Zaphnath-paaneah, a revealer of secrets, as the king of Babylon here calls Daniel; so that the preambles to their patents of honour are the same; for and in consideration of their good services done to the crown in revealing secrets.

4. He preferred his companions for his sake, and upon his special instance and request, ver. 49. Daniel himself sat in the gate of the king, as president of the council, chief-justice, or prime minister of state, or perhaps chamberlain of the household, but he used his interest for his friends as became a good man, and procured places in the government for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They that had helped him with their prayers shall share with him in his honours, such a grateful sense had he even of that service. The preferring of them would be a great stay and help to Daniel in his place and business. And these pious Jews being thus preferred in Babylon, had great opportunity of serving their brethren in captivity, and of doing them many good offices, which, no doubt, they were ready to do. Thus, sometimes, before God brings his people into trouble, he prepares it that it may be easy to them.

C H A P. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we left Daniel's companions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in honour and power, princes of the provinces, and preferred for their relation to the God of Israel, and the interest they had in him; I know not whether I should say, it were well if this honour had all the saints: no, there are many whom it would not be good for, the saints honour is reserved for another world; but here we have those same three men as much under the king's displeasure as then they were in his favour: and yet more truly, more highly honoured by their God than there they were honoured by their prince; both by the grace wherewith he enabled them rather to suffer than to sin; and by the miraculous glorious deliverance he wrought for them out of their sufferings. It is a very memorable story, a glorious instance of the power and goodness of God, and a great encouragement to the constancy of his people in trying times. The apostle refers to it when he mentions, among the believing heroes, those who by faith quenched the violence of fire, Heb. xi. 34. We have here (1.) Nebuchadnezzar's erecting and dedicating a golden image, and his requiring all his subjects, of what rank or degree soever, to fall down and worship it, and the general compliance of his people with that command, ver. 1—7. (2.) Information given against the Jewish princes for refusing to worship this golden image, ver. 8—12. (3.) Their constant persisting in that refusal, notwithstanding his rage and menaces, ver. 13—18. (4.) The casting of them into the fiery furnace for their refusal, ver. 19—23. (5.) Their miraculous preservation in the fire by the power of God, and their invitation out of the fire by the favour of the king, who was by this miracle convinced of his error in casting them in, ver. 24—27. (6.) The honour which the king gave to God hereupon, and the favour he shewed to those faithful worthies, ver. 28—30.

1. **N**ebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. 2. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the

princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. 3. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. 4. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, 5. That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. 6. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 7. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

We have no certainty concerning the date of this story, only, that if this image, that Nebuchadnezzar dedicated, had any relation to that which he dreamed of, it is probable it happened not long after that; some reckon it to be about the seventh year of Nebuchadnezzar, a year before Jehoiachin's captivity, in which Ezekiel was carried away. Observe,

1. A golden image set up to be worshipped. Babylon was full of idols already, yet nothing will serve this imperious prince, but they must have one more; for those who have forsaken the one only living God, and begin to set up many gods, will find the gods they set up so unsatisfying, and their desire after them so insatiable, that they will multiply them without measure, wander after them endlessly, and never know when they have enough. Idolaters are fond of novelty and variety, they chuse new gods. They that have many will wish to have more. Nebuchadnezzar, the king, that he might exert the prerogative of his crown, to make what gods he thought fit, set up this image, ver. 1. Observe, (1.) The *valuableness* of it, it was an image of gold, not all gold sure, as rich as he was, it is likely he could not afford that, but overlaid with gold. Note, The worshippers of false Gods are not wont to stick at charges in fitting up images, and worshipping them; they lavish gold out of the bag for that purpose, Isa. xlii. 6. which shames our niggardliness in the worship of the true God. (2.) The *vastness* of it: it was threescore cubits high and six cubits broad. It exceeded the ordinary stature of a man fifteen times; for that is reckoned but four cubits, or six foot, as if its being monstrous would make amends for its being lifeless. But why did Nebuchadnezzar set up this image? Some suggest, it was to clear himself from the imputation of being turned Jew, because he had lately spoken with great honour of the God of Israel, and had preferred some of his worshippers. Or, perhaps, he set it up as an image of himself, and designed to be himself worshipped in it; proud princes affected to have divine honours paid them: Alexander did so, pretending himself to be the son of Jupiter Olympius. He was told, that in the image he had seen in his dream, he was represented by the head of gold, who was to be succeeded by kingdoms of baser metal; but here he sets up to be himself the whole image, for he makes it all of gold: see here, 1. How the good impressions that were then made upon him were quite lost, and quickly. He then acknowledged, that the God of Israel is of a truth a God of gods, and a Lord of kings; and yet now in defiance of the express law of that God, he sets up an image to be worshipped, not only continues in his former idolatries, but contrives new ones. Note, Strong convictions often come short of a sound conversion. Many in a pang have owned the absurdity and dangerousness of sin, and yet have gone on in it. (2.) How that very dream, and the interpretation of it, which then made such good impressions upon him, now had a quite contrary effect. Then it made him fall down as an humble worshipper of God, now it made him set up for a bold competitor with God. Then he thought it a great thing to be the golden head of the image, and owned himself obliged to God for it, but his mind riling with his condition, now he thinks that too little, and in contradiction to God himself, and his oracle, he will be all in all.

2. A general convention of the states summoned to attend the solemnity of the dedication of this image, ver. 2, 3. Messengers are dispatched to all parts of the kingdom, to gather together the princes, dukes, and lords, all the peers of the realm, with all officers civil and military, the captains and commanders of the forces, the judges, the treasurers, or general receivers, the counsellors, and the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, they must all come to the dedicating of this image, upon pain and peril.

peril of what shall fall thereon. He summons the *great men* for the greater honour of his idol; it is therefore mentioned to the glory of Christ, that *kings shall bring presents unto him*. If he can bring *them* to pay homage to his golden image, he doubts not but the inferior people will follow of course: in obedience to the king's summons, all the magistrates and officers of that vast kingdom leave the services of their particular countries, and come to Babylon to the dedicating of this golden image; long journeys many of them took, and expensive ones upon a very foolish errand; but as the idols are senseless things, such are the worshippers.

3. A proclamation made, commanding all manner of persons present before the image, upon the signal given, to fall down prostrate, and worship the image, under the style and title of *The golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up*. A herald proclaims this aloud throughout this vast assembly of grantees, with their numerous train of servants and attendants, and a great crowd of people, no doubt, that were not sent for; let them all take notice, (1.) That the king doth strictly charge and command all manner of persons to fall down and *worship the golden image*; whatever other gods they worship at other times, *now* they must worship this. (2.) That they must all do this *just at the same time*, in token of their communion with each other in this idolatrous service: and that in order hereunto, notice shall be given by a consort of musick, which would likewise serve to adorn the solemnity, and to *sweeten* and *soften* the minds of those that were both to yield, and to bring them to comply with the king's command. This mirth and gaiety in the worship would be very agreeable to carnal sensual minds, that are strangers to that spiritual worship which is owing to God who is a *spirit*.

4. The *general compliance* of the assembly with this command, *ver. 7.* They *heard the sound* of the musical instruments, both wind instruments and hand instruments, the *cornet* and *flute*, with the *harp*, *sackbut*, *psaltery* and *dulcimer*, the melody of which they thought was *ravishing*, and fit enough it was to excite such a devotion as they were then to pay; and immediately they all as one man, as soldiers that are wont to be exercised by beat of drum, *all the people, nations, and languages fell down and worshipped the golden image*. And no marvel, when it was proclaimed, That whosoever would not *worship this golden image*, should be immediately thrown into the *midst of a burning fiery furnace*, ready prepared for that purpose, *ver. 6.* Here was the charms of musick to allure them into a compliance, and the terrors of the fiery furnace to frighten them into a compliance. Thus beset with temptation, they all yielded. Note, That way that sense directs, the most will go; there is nothing so bad which the careless world will not be drawn to by a consort of musick, or driven to by a fiery furnace. And by such methods as these false worship hath been set up and maintained.

8. ¶ Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near and accused the Jews. 9. They spake and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. 10. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, shall fall down and worship the golden image: 11. And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, *that* he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. 12. There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: these men, O king, have not regarded thee, they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. 13. ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: then they brought these men before the king. 14. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? 15. Now if ye be ready, that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace, and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands? 16. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. 17. If it be *so*, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. 18. But if not, be it known

unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

It was strange that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would be present at this assembly, when, it is likely, they knew for what intent it was called together: Daniel, we may suppose, was absent, either his business calling him away, or having leave from the king to withdraw; unless we suppose that he stood so high in the king's favour, that none durst complain of him, for his non-compliance: but why did not his companions keep out of the way? Surely because they would obey the king's orders as far as they could, and would be ready to bear a publick testimony against this gross idolatry. They did not think it enough not to *bow down* to the image, but being in office thought themselves obliged to *stand up* against it, though it was the image which the king their master set up, and would be a *golden image* to them that worshipped it.

Now, 1. Information is brought to the king by *certain Chaldeans* against these three gentlemen, that they did not obey the king's edict, *ver. 8.* Perhaps these Chaldeans that accused them were some of those *magicians or astrologers* that were particularly called Chaldeans, *chap. ii. 2, 4.* who bore a grudge to Daniel's companions for his sake, because he had *eclipsed* them, and so had these his companions. They by their prayers had obtained the *mercy*, which saved the lives of these Chaldeans, and behold how they requite them, evil for good; for their love they are their adversaries. Thus Jeremiah *stood before God* to *speak good for them*, who afterwards *digged a pit for his life*, *Jer. xviii. 20.* we must not think it strange if we meet with such ungrateful men. Or, perhaps, they were such of the Chaldeans as expected the places to which they were advanced, and envied them their preferments; and *who can stand before envy?* They appeal to the king himself concerning the edict, with all due respect to his majesty, and the usual compliment, *O king, live for ever*, (as if they aimed at nothing but his honour, and to serve his interest, when really they were putting him upon that which would endanger the ruin of him and his kingdom) they beg leave (1.) To put him in mind of the law he had lately made, That all manner of persons, without exception of nation or language, should *fall down and worship this golden image*; they put him in mind also of the penalty which by the law was to be inflicted upon recusants, that they were to be *cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace*, *ver. 10, 11.* It cannot be denied but that this was the law, whether a righteous law, or no, ought to be considered. (2.) To inform him, that these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, had not conformed to this edict, *ver. 12.* It is likely Nebuchadnezzar had no particular design to ensnare them, in making the law, for then he would himself have had his eye upon them, and would not have needed this information: but their enemies, that sought an occasion against them, laid hold on this, and were forward to accuse them. To aggravate the matter, and incense the king the more against them, (1.) They put him in mind of the dignity to which the criminals had been preferred. Though they were Jews, foreigners, captives, men of a despised nation and religion, yet the king had *set them over the affairs of the province of Babylon*. It was therefore very ungrateful, and an insufferable piece of insolence for them to disobey the king's command, that had shared so much of the king's favour. And besides the high station they were in would make their refusal the more scandalous, to be of ill example, and to have an ill influence upon others; and therefore it was necessary it should be severely animadverted upon. Thus princes that are incensed enough against innocent people, commonly want not those about them who do all they can to make them worse. (2.) They suggest that it was done maliciously, contumaciously, and in contempt of him and his authority, they have *set no regard upon thee*; for they *serve not the gods* thou serveest, and which thou requirest them to serve, nor *worship the golden image which thou hast set up*.

2. These three pious Jews are immediately brought before the king, and arraigned and examined upon this information. Nebuchadnezzar fell into a great passion, and in his rage and fury commanded them to be seized, *ver. 13.* How little was it the honour of this mighty prince, that he had rule over so many nations, when at the same time he had no *rule over his own spirit*? that there were so many who were subjects and captives to him, when he was himself a perfect slave to his own brutish passions, and led captive by them? How unfit was he to rule reasonable men, who could not himself be ruled by reason? It needed not be a surprize to him to hear that these three men did not now serve his gods, for he knew very well they never had done it, and their religion which they had always adhered to forbade them to do it: Nor had he any reason to think they did it in contempt of his authority, who had in all instances shewed themselves respectful and dutiful to him as their prince. But it was especially unseasonable at *this time*, when he was in the midst of his devotions, dedicating his *golden image*, to be in such a *rage and fury*, and so much to discompose himself. The *discretion of a man* one would think should at least have *deferred this anger*.

anger. True devotion calms the spirit, quiets and meekens it; but superstition, and a devotion to false Gods inflames mens passions, inspires them with rage and fury, and turns them into brutes. *The wrath of a king is as the roaring of a lion*, so was the wrath of this king; and yet when he was in such a heat, these three men were brought before him, and appeared with an undaunted courage, an unshaken constancy.

3. The case is laid before them in short, and it is put to them whether they will comply or no. (1.) The king asked them whether it was true, that they had not worshipped the golden image, when others did, *ver. 14. Is it of purpose?* so some read it, was it designedly and deliberately done, or was it only thro' inadvertency that you have not served my gods? What! you that I have nourished and brought up, that have been educated and maintained at my charge, that I have been so kind to, and done so much for, you that have been in such reputation for wisdom, and therefore should better have known your duty to your prince; what! do not you serve my gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Note, The faithfulness of God's servants to him has often been the wonder of their enemies and persecutors, who think it strange that they run not with them to the same excess of riot. (2.) He was willing to admit them to a new trial; if they did on purpose not do it before, yet it may be upon second thoughts they will change their minds; it is therefore repeated to them upon what terms they now stand; *ver. 15.* (1.) The king is willing that musick shall play again, only for their sakes, to soften them into a compliance; and if they will not like the deaf adder stop their ears, but will hearken to the voice of the charmers, and will worship the golden image, well and good, their former omission shall be pardoned. But (2.) The king is resolved, if they persist in their refusal, that they shall immediately be cast into the fiery furnace, and shall not have so much as an hour's reprieve. Thus doth the matter lie in a little compass, turn or burn; and because he knew they buoyed themselves up in their refusal with a confidence in their God, he insolently sets him defiance, and *who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?* let him if he can. Now he forgot what he himself once owned, that their God was a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, chap. ii. 47. Proud men are still ready to say, as Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?* or, as Nebuchadnezzar, who is the Lord that I should fear his power.

4. They give in their answer, which they all agree in, that they still adhere to their resolution, not to worship the golden image, *ver. 16, 17, 18.* we have here such an instance of fortitude and magnanimity as is scarce to be paralleled; we call these the three children, and they were indeed young men, but we should rather call them, the three champions, the first three of the worthies of God's kingdom among men. They did not break out into any intemperate heat or passion against those that did worship the golden image, did not insult or affront them; nor did they rashly thrust themselves upon the trial, or go out of their way to court martyrdom, but when they were duly called to the fiery trial they quitted themselves bravely, with a conduct and courage that became sufferers for so good a cause: The king was not so daringly bad in making this idol, but they were as daringly good in witnessing against it. They keep their temper admirably well, do not call the king a tyrant, or an idolater, the cause of God needs not the wrath of man, but with an exemplary calmness and sedateness of mind, they deliberately give in their answer which they resolve to abide by. Observe,

1. Their gracious and generous contempt of death, and the noble negligence with which they look upon the dilemma that they are put to. *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.* They do not in fullness deny him an answer, nor stand mute; but they tell him they are in no care about it. *There needs not an answer*, so some read it, they are resolved not to comply, and the king is resolved they shall die if they do not, the matter therefore is determined, and what needs it be disputed! But it is better read, *we want not an answer for thee*, nor have it to seek, but come prepared. (1.) They needed no time to deliberate concerning the matter of their answer; for they did not in the least hesitate, whether they should comply or no. It was a matter of life and death, and one would think they might have considered a while before they had resolved; life is desirable, and death is dreadful: But when the sin and duty that were in the case were immediately determined by the letter of the second commandment, and no room was left to question that, the life and death that were in the case, were not to be considered. Note, Those that would avoid sin must not parley with temptation; when that which we are allured or affrighted to is manifestly evil, the motion is rather to be rejected with indignation and abhorrence than reasoned with; stand not to pause about it, but say as Christ has taught us, *get thee behind me, Satan.* (2.) They needed no time to contrive how they should word it; while they were advocates for God, and were called out to witness in his cause, they doubted not but it should be given them in that same hour what they should speak, Mat. x. 19. They were not contriving an evasive answer, when a direct answer was expected from them, no nor would they seem to court the king not to insist upon it; here is nothing in their answer that looks like compliment; they begin not as their accusers did, with *O king, live for ever*, no artful insinuation, *ad captandam benevolentiam*, but every thing

that is plain and downright, *O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee.* Note, Those that make their duty their main care, need not be careful concerning the event.

2. Their believing confidence in God, and their dependence upon him, *ver. 18.* This was it that enabled them to look with so much contempt upon death, death in pomp, death in all its terrors, they trusted in the living God, and by that faith chose rather to suffer than to sin; they therefore feared not the wrath of the king, but endured, because by faith they had an eye to him that is invisible, Heb. xi. 25, 27. *If it be so*, if we are brought to this strait, if we must be thrown into the fiery furnace, unless we serve thy gods; know then, (1.) That tho' we worship not thy gods, yet we are not atheists, there is a God whom we can call ours, to whom we faithfully adhere. (2.) That we serve this God, we have devoted ourselves to his honour, we employ ourselves in his work, and depend upon him to protect us, provide for us, and reward us. (3.) Thus we are well assured this God is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; whether he will or no, we are sure he can either prevent our being cast into the furnace, or rescue us out of it. Note, The faithful servants of God will find him a master able to bear them out in his service, and to controul and over-rule all the powers that are armed against them. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst.* (4.) That we have reason to hope he will deliver us; partly because in such a vast appearance of idolaters, it would be very much for the honour of his great name to deliver them; and, partly, because Nebuchadnezzar had defied him to do it, *Who is that God that shall deliver you?* God sometimes appears wonderfully for the silencing of the blasphemies of the enemy, as well as for the answering of the prayers of his people, *Psal. lxxiv. 18, 22. Deut. xxxii. 27.* But if he do not deliver us from the fiery furnace, he will deliver us out of thy hand. He can but torment and kill the body, and after that there is no more that he can do, then they are got out of his reach, delivered out of his hand. Note, Good thoughts of God will help very much to carry us through sufferings, and a full assurance that he is with us while we are with him; and if he be for us, we need not fear what man can do unto us. Let him do his worst. God will deliver us either from death or in death.

3. Their firm resolution, however, to stick to their principles, *ver. 18. But if not*, tho' God should not think fit to deliver us from the fiery furnace, which yet we know he can do; if he should suffer us to fall into thy hand, and fall by thy hand, yet be it known unto thee, O king, *we will not serve these gods*, tho' they are thy gods, nor worship this golden image, tho' thou thyself hast set it up. They are neither ashamed nor afraid to own their religion, and tell the king to his face, that they do not fear him, they will not yield to him; would they have consulted with flesh and blood, much might have been said to bring them to a compliance, especially when there was no other way of avoiding death; *so great a death.* (1.) They were not required to abjure their own God, or to renounce his worship, no, nor by any verbal profession or declaration to own this golden image to be a god, but only to bow down before it, which they might do with a secret reserve of their hearts for the God of Israel, inwardly detesting this idolatry, as Naaman bowed in the house of Rimmon. (2.) They were not to fall into a course of idolatry, it was but one single act that was required of them, which would be done in a minute, and the danger was over, and they might afterwards declare their sorrow for it. (3.) The king that commanded it had an absolute power, they were under it, not only as subjects but as captives, and if they did it, it was purely by coercion and duress, and that would serve to excuse them. (4.) He had been their benefactor, had educated and preferred them, and in gratitude to him they ought to go as far as they could, tho' it were to strain a point, a point of conscience. (5.) They were now driven into a strange country, and to those that were so driven out; it was in effect, said, *Go and serve other gods*, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. it was taken for granted, that in their disposition, they would serve other gods, and it was made a part of the judgment, *Deut. iv. 28.* They might be excused if they go down the stream, when it is so strong. (6.) Did not their kings and their princes, and their fathers, yea and their priests too, set up idols even in God's temple, and worship them there, and not only bow down to them, but erect altars, burn incense, and offer sacrifices; even their own children to them? Did not all the ten tribes for many ages worship gods of gold, at Dan and Bethel? And shall they be more precise than their fathers; *Communis error facit jus.* (7.) If they should comply they would save their lives, and keep their places, and so be in a capacity to do a great deal of service to their brethren in Babylou, and to do it long; for they were young men, and rising men. But there is enough in that one word of God, wherewith to answer and silence these, and many more such like carnal reasonings, *thou shalt not bow down thyself to any images nor worship them.* They know they must obey God rather than man; they must rather suffer than sin; and must not do evil that good may come. And therefore none of these things move them; they are resolved rather to die in their integrity, than live in their iniquity: While their brethren, who yet remained in their own land, were worshipping images of theirs, these here in Babylou would not be brought to it by constraint; but as if they were good by antiphrasis, were most zealous against idolatry in an idolatrous

trous country. And truly, all things considered, the saving of them from this sinful compliance, was as great a miracle in the kingdom of grace, as the saving of them out of the fiery furnace, was in the kingdom of nature. These were they who formerly resolved not to defile themselves with the king's meat, and now they as bravely resolved not to defile themselves with his gods. Note, A steadfast, self-denying adherence to God and duty in lesser instances, will qualify and prepare us for the like in greater: And in this we must be resolute, never, under any pretence whatsoever, to worship images, or to say a confederacy with them that do so.

19. ¶ Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: *therefore* he spake and commanded that they should heat the furnace one seven times more than it was wont to be heat. 20. And he commanded the most mighty men that were in his army, to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. 21. Then these men were bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 22. Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. 23. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. 24. Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake and said unto his counsellors, did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. 25. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the son of God. 26. ¶ Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth of the midst of the fire. 27. And the princes, governours, and captains, and the king's counsellors being gathered together, saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

In these verses we have,

1. The casting of these three faithful servants of God into the fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had himself known and owned so much of the true God, that one would have thought, tho' his pride and vanity carried him to make this golden image, and set it up to be worshipped, yet that what these young men now said, (whom he had formerly found to be *wiser* than all his *wife men*) should have revived his convictions, and at least have engaged him to dispense with them: But it proved quite otherwise.

(1.) Instead of being convinced by what they said, he was *exasperated*, and made more outrageous, *ver.* 19. It made him full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against these men. Note, Brutish passions, the more they are indulged the more violent they grow, and even *change* the countenance, to the great reproach of the wisdom and reason of a man. Nebuchadnezzar in this heat exchanged the awful majesty of a prince upon his throne, or a judge upon the bench, for the frightful fury of a *wild bull in a net*; would men in a passion but look their faces in a glass, they would blush at their own folly, and turn all their displeasure against themselves.

(2.) Instead of mitigating their punishments in consideration of their quality, and the posts of honour they were in, he ordered it to be heightened, that they should *heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated* for other malefactors, *i. e.* that they should put seven times more fuel to it; which tho' it would not make their death more *grievous*, but rather dispatch them the sooner, yet was designed to signify, That the king looked upon their crime as *seven times* more heinous than the crimes of others, and so made their death more *ignominious*. But God brought glory to himself out of this foolish instance of the tyrant's rage, for tho' it would not have made their death the more grievous, yet it did make their deliverance much the more illustrious.

(3.) He ordered them to be bound in their clothes, and cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; which was done accordingly, *ver.* 20, 21. They were bound that they might not struggle or make any resistance; were bound in *their clothes*, for haste, or that they might be consumed the more slowly and

gradually: But God's providence ordered it for the increase of the miracle, in that their clothes were not so much as singed. They were bound in their coats or mantles, their *hosen* or breeches, and their *bats*, or *turbants*, as if in detestation of their crime they would have their clothes to be burnt with them. What a terrible death was this! To be *cast bound into the midst of a burning fiery furnace*, *ver.* 23. It makes one's flesh tremble to think of it, and horror to take hold on one. It is amazing that the tyrant was so hard-hearted as to inflict such a punishment, and the confessors so stout-hearted as to submit to it rather than sin against God. But what is this to the *second death*? To that furnace into which the tares shall be cast in bundles? To that lake which burns eternally with fire and brimstone? Let Nebuchadnezzar heat his furnace as hot as he can, a few minutes will finish the torment of those who are cast into it: But hell-fire tortures, and doth not kill; the pain of damned sinners is more exquisite, and the smoke of their torment ascends for ever and ever, and they have no rest, no intermission, no cessation of their pains, who have worshipped the beast and his image, *Rev.* xiv. 10, 11. whereas their pain would be soon over that were cast into this furnace, for not worshipping this Babylonian *beast and his image*.

(4.) It was a remarkable providence that the men, the *mighty men*, that bound them and threw them into the furnace were themselves consumed or suffocated by the flame, *ver.* 22. The king's commandment was urgent, That they should dispatch them quickly, and be sure to do it effectually, and therefore they resolved to go to the very mouth of the furnace, that they might throw them into the midst of it, but were in such haste, that they would not take time to arm themselves accordingly. The apocryphal additions to Daniel say, that the flame ascended forty-nine cubits above the mouth of the furnace. Probably, God ordered it, so that the wind blew it directly upon them with such violence that it smothered them. God did thus immediately plead the cause of his injured servants, and take vengeance for them on their persecutors, whom he punished, not only in the very act of their sin, but by it. But these men were only the instruments of cruelty; he that bid them do it had the greater sin; yet they suffered justly for executing an unjust decree, and it is very likely they did it with pleasure, and were glad to be so employed. And Nebuchadnezzar himself was reserved for a further reckoning. There is a day coming when proud tyrants will be punished, not only for the cruelties they have been guilty of, but for employing those about them in their cruelties, and so exposing them to the judgments of God.

2. The deliverance of these three faithful servants of God out of the furnace. When they were cast bound into the midst of that devouring fire, we might well conclude, we should hear no more of them, that their very bones would be calcined; but to our amazement we here find that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are yet alive.

1. Nebuchadnezzar finds them walking in the fire: *he was astonished, and rose up in haste*, *ver.* 24. Perhaps the slaying of the men that executed his sentence was that which astonished him, as well it might, for he had reason to think his own turn would be next, or it was some unaccountable impression upon his own mind that *astonied* him, and made him *rise up in haste*, and go to the furnace to see what was become of those he had cast into it. Note, God can strike those with astonishment whose hearts are most hardened both against him, and against his people. He that made the soul can make his sword to approach to it, even to that of the greatest tyrant. In his astonishment he calls his counsellors about him, and appeals to them whether *we did not cast three men bound into the fire*. It seems it was done by order, not only of the king, but of the council. They durst not but concur with him, which he forced them to do, that they might share with him in the guilt and odium. *True, O king*, say they; we did order such an execution to be done, and it was done; but now (saith the king) I have been looking into the furnace, and I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, *ver.* 25.

(1.) They were loosed from their bonds; the fire that did not so much as singe their clothes, burnt the cords wherewith they were tied, and set them at liberty: thus God's people have their hearts enlarged through the grace of God, by those very troubles with which their enemies designed to straiten and hamper them. (2.) They had no hurt, made no complaint, felt no pain, or uneasiness in the least; the flame did not scorch them, the smoke did not stifle them, they were alive, and as well as ever in the midst of the flames. See how the God of nature can, when he pleaseth, controul the powers of nature, to make them serve his purposes. Now was fulfilled in the letter that gracious promise, *Isa.* xliii. 2. *When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.* By faith they *quench the violence of the fire, quench the fiery darts of the wicked.*

(3.) They walked in the midst of the fire: the furnace was large, so that they had room to walk; they were unhurt, so that they were able to walk; their minds were easy, so that they were disposed to walk, as in a paradise, or garden of pleasure. Can a man walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt? *Prov.* vi. 28. yes, they did it with as much pleasure as the king of Tyrus walked up and down in the midst of his *stones of fire*, his precious stones that sparkled as fire, *Ezek.* xxviii. 14. They were not

striving to get out, finding themselves unhurt, but leaving it to that God who preserved them in the fire to bring them out of it; they walked up and down in the midst of it unconcerned. One of the apocryphal writings relates at large the prayer which Azariah, one of the three, prayed in the fire, wherein he laments the calamities and iniquities of Israel, and intreats God's favour to his people: and the song of praise which they all three sung in the midst of the flames; in both which there are remarkable strains of devotion: but we have reason to think with Grotius, that they were composed by some Jew of a later age, not as what were used, but only as what might have been used on this occasion, and therefore we justly reject them as no part of holy writ. (4.) There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was like the son of God, he appeared as a divine person; a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a son. Like an angel, so some, and angels are called sons of God, Job xxxviii. 7. In the apocryphal narrative of this story, it is said the angel of the Lord came down into the furnace, and Nebuchadnezzar here saith, ver. 28. that God sent his angel and delivered them; and it was an angel that shut the lions mouths when Daniel was in the den, chap. vi. 22. But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel: he appeared often in our nature before he assumed it for good and all; and never more seasonably, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world in the fulness of time, than now, when to deliver his chosen out of the fire, he came and walked with them in the fire. Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need fear no evil. Hereby Christ shewed, that what is done against his people, he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace, doth in effect throw him in; I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest, Isa. lxiii. 9.

2. Nebuchadnezzar calls them out of the furnace, ver. 26. He came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, bids them come forth and come hither; come forth, come, so some read it: he speaks with a great deal of tenderness and concern, and stands ready to lend them his hand, and help them out. He is convinced by their miraculous preservation, that he did ill to cast them into the furnace, and therefore he doth not thrust them out privily, no verily, but he will come himself and fetch them out, Acts xvi. 37. Observe the respectful title that he gives them; when he was in the heat of his fury and rage against them, it is likely, he called them rebels and traitors, and all the ill names he could invent, but now he owns them for the servants of the most high God; a God who now appears able to deliver them out of his hand. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince the proudest of men, that he is the most high God, and above them, and too hard for them, even in those things wherein they deal proudly and presumptuously, Exod. xviii. 11. He will likewise let them know who are his servants, and that he owns them, and will stand by them. Elijah prayed, 1 Kings xviii. 36. Let it be known that thou art God, and that I am thy servant. Nebuchadnezzar now embraces those whom he had abandoned, and is very officious about them now he perceives them to be the favourites of heaven. Note, What persecutors have done against God's servants, when God opens their eyes, they must as far as they can undo again.

How the fourth, whose form was like the son of God, withdrew, and whether he vanished away or visibly ascended, we are not told, but of the other three we are informed, 1. That they came forth out of the midst of the fire, as Abraham their father out of Ur, i. e. the fire of the Chaldees, into which, saith this tradition of the Jews, he was cast, for refusing to worship idols, and out of which he was delivered, as those his three children were; when they had their discharge they did not tempt God by staying in any longer, but came forth, as brands out of the burning. 2. That it was made to appear to the full satisfaction of all the amazed spectators, that they had not received the least damage by the fire, ver. 27. All the great men came together to view them, and found that there was not so much as a hair of their head singed. Here that was true in the letter, which our Saviour spoke figuratively for an assurance to his suffering servants, that they should sustain no real damage, Luke xxi. 18. there shall not a hair of your head perish. Their clothes did not so much as change colour, or smell of fire, much less were their bodies in the least scorched, or blistered; no, the fire had no power on them. The Chaldeans worshipped the fire, as a sort of an image of the sun, so that in restraining the fire now, God put contempt, not only upon their king, but upon their god too, and shewed that his voice divides the flames of fire, as well as the floods of water, Psal. xxix. 7. when he pleaseth to make a way for his people through the midst of it. It is our God only that is the consuming fire, Heb. xii. 29. other fire if he but speak the word shall not consume.

28. Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants

that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. 29. Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill, because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort. 30. Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, in the province of Babylon.

The strict observations that were made, *super visum corporis*, by the princes and governors, and all the great men who were present upon this publick occasion, and who could not be supposed partial in favour of the confessors, contributed much to the clearing of this miracle, and the magnifying of the power and grace of God in it. That indeed a notable miracle has been done is manifest, and we cannot deny it, Acts iv. 16. Let us now see what effect it had upon Nebuchadnezzar.

1. He gives glory to the God of Israel, as a God able and ready to protect his worshippers, ver. 28. *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.* Let him have the honour both of the faithful allegiance which his subjects bear to him, and the powerful protection he grants to them, neither of which can be paralleled between any other nation and their gods. The king doth himself acknowledge and adore him, and thinks it is fit he should be acknowledged and adored by all: *Blessed be the God of Shadrach.* Note, God can extort confessions of his blessedness even from those that have been ready to curse him to his face. (1.) He gives him the glory of his power, that he was able to protect his worshippers against the most mighty and malignant enemies. *There is no other god that can deliver after this sort,* ver. 29. no not this golden image which he had set up. For this reason there was no other god that obliged his worshippers to cleave to him only, and to suffer death rather than worship any other, as the God of Israel did; for they could not engage to bear them out in so doing as he could. If God can work such deliverance as no other can, he may demand such obedience as no other may. (2.) He gives him the glory of his goodness, that he was ready to do it, ver. 28. *he hath sent his angel and delivered his servants.* Bel could not save his worshippers from being burnt at the mouth of the furnace, but the God of Israel saved his from being burnt when they were cast into the midst of the furnace; because they refused to worship any other god. By this Nebuchadnezzar was plainly given to understand, That all the great success which he had had, and should yet have against the people of Israel, which he gloried in, as if he had therein over-powered the God of Israel, was owing purely to their sin: if the body of that nation had faithfully adhered to their own God, and the worship of him only, as these three men did, they should all have been delivered out of his hand, as these three men were. And this was a necessary instruction for him at this time.

2. He applauds the constancy of these three men in their religion, and describes it to their honour, ver. 28. though he is not himself persuaded to own their God for his, and to worship him, because if he do so, he knows he must worship him only, and renounce all others, and he calls him the God of Shadrach, not my God; yet he commends them for sticking to him, and not serving or worshipping any other god but their own. Note, There are many who are not religious themselves, and yet will own they are clearly in the right that are religious, and are steadfast in their religion. Though they are not themselves persuaded to close with it, they will commend those who having closed with it, cleave to it. If men have given up their names to that God who will alone be served, let them stick to their principles, and serve him only whatever it cost them. Such a constancy in the true religion will turn to mens praise, even among them that are without; when unsteadiness, treachery, and double dealing, is what all men will cry shame on. He commends them that they did this, (1.) With a generous contempt of their lives, which they valued not in comparison with the favour of God, and the testimony of a good conscience. They yielded their own bodies to be cast into the fiery furnace rather than they would not only not forsake their God, but not affront him by once paying that homage to any other which is due to him alone. Note, Those shall have their praise, if not of men, yet of God, who prefer their souls before their bodies, and will rather lose their lives than forsake their God. Those know not the worth and value of religion that do not think it worth suffering for. (2.) They did it with a glorious contradiction to their prince: they changed the king's word, i. e. they went contrary to it, and thereby put contempt upon both his precepts and threatnings, and made him repent and revoke both. Note, Even kings themselves must own, that when their commands are contrary to the commands of God, he is to be obeyed, and not they. (3.) They did it with a gracious confidence in their God. They trusted in him that he would stand by them in what they did, that he would either bring them out of the fiery furnace back to their place on earth,

earth, or lead them *thorough* the fiery furnace, forward to their place in heaven; and in this confidence they became *fearless* of the king's wrath, and *regardless* of their own lives. Note, A *steadfast faith in God* will produce a *steadfast faithfulness to God*. Now this honourable testimony thus publicly born by the king himself to these servants of God, we may well think would have a good influence upon the rest of the Jews that were or should be captives in Babylon. Their neighbours could not with any confidence urge them to do that, nor could they for shame do it which their brethren were so highly applauded by the king himself for not doing. Nay, and what God did for these his servants would help not only to keep the Jews close to their religion while they were in captivity, but to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, for which end they were sent into captivity; and when it had had that blessed effect upon them, they might be assured God would deliver them out of that furnace, as now he delivered their brethren out of this.

3. He issues out a royal edict, straitly forbidding any to speak evil of the God of Israel, *ver. 29*. We have reason to think, that both the sins and the troubles of Israel had given great occasion, though no just occasion, to the Chaldeans to blaspheme the God of Israel, and it is likely Nebuchadnezzar himself had encouraged it; but now, though he is no true convert, nor is wrought upon to worship him, yet he resolves never to speak ill of him again, nor to suffer others to do so. *Whoever shall speak any thing amiss, any error, so some; or rather any reproach or blasphemy, whoever shall speak with contempt of the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they shall be counted the worst of malefactors, and dealt with accordingly, they shall be cut in pieces, as Agag was by the sword of Samuel, and their houses shall be demolished, and made a dunghil.* The miracle now wrought by the power of this God in defence of his worshippers, publicly in the sight of the thousands of Babylon, was a sufficient justification of this edict. And it would contribute much to the ease of the Jews in their captivity, to be by this law screened from the fiery darts of reproach and blasphemy, with which otherwise they would have been continually annoyed. Note, It is a great mercy to the church, and a good point gained, when its enemies, though they have not their hearts turned, yet have their mouths stopt, and their tongues tied. If a heathen prince laid such a restraint upon the proud lips of blasphemers, much more should Christian princes do it; nay, in this thing, one would think men should be a law to themselves; and that those who have so little love to God, that they care not to speak well of him, yet could never find in their hearts, for we are sure they could never find cause, to *speak any thing amiss* of him.

4. He not only reverseth the attainder of these three men, but restores them to their places in the government, *makes them to prosper*, so the word is, and prefers them to greater and more advantageous trusts than they had been in before. He *promoted them in the province* of Babylon, which was much to their honour, and the comfort of their brethren in captivity there. Note, It is the wisdom of princes to prefer and employ men of steadfastness in religion; for those are most likely to be faithful to them, who are faithful to God; and it is likely to be well with them, when God's favourites are made theirs.

C H A P. IV.

The penman of this chapter is Nebuchadnezzar himself; the story concerning him here recorded, is given us in his own words, as he himself drew it up and published it; but Daniel, a prophet by inspiration, inserts it in his history, and so it is become a part of sacred writ, and a very observable part. Nebuchadnezzar was as daring a rival with God Almighty for the sovereignty, as perhaps any mortal man ever was: but here he fairly owns himself conquered, and gives it under his hand, That the God of Israel is above him. Here is, (1.) The preface to his narrative, wherein he acknowledgeth God's dominion over him, *ver. 1—3*. (2.) The narrative itself, wherein he relates, (1.) His dream, which puzzled the magicians, *ver. 1—18*. (2.) The interpretation of his dream by Daniel, who shewed him that it was a prognostication of his own fall, advising him therefore to repent and reform, *ver. 19—27*. (3.) The accomplishment of it in his running stark mad for seven years, and then recovering the use of his reason again, *ver. 28—36*. (4.) The conclusion of the narrative, with an humble acknowledgment and adoration of God as Lord of all, *ver. 37*. This was extorted from him by the over-ruling power of that God who hath all mens hearts in his hand, and stands upon record a lasting proof of God's supremacy, a monument of his glory, a trophy of his victory, and a warning to all not to think of prospering, while they lift up or harden their hearts against God.

1. **N**ebuchadnezzar, the king, unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. 2. I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me. 3. How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

Here is, first, something of form, which was usual in writs, proclamations, or circular letters issued out by the king, *ver. 1*. The royal stile which Nebuchadnezzar makes use of, has nothing in it of pomp, or fancy, but plain and short, and unaffected, *Nebuchadnezzar the king*. If at other times he made use of great swelling words of vanity in his title; now he laid them all aside, for he was old, he was lately recovered from a distraction, which had humbled and mortified him, and was now in the actual contemplation of God's greatness and sovereignty. The declaration is directed not only to his own subjects, but to all to whom this present writing shall come; to *all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth*. He is not only willing they should all hear of it, though it carry the account of his own infamy (which perhaps none durst have published, if he had not done it himself, and therefore Daniel published the original paper). But he strictly chargeth and commandeth all manner of persons to take notice of it; for all are concerned, and it may be profitable to all. He salutes those to whom he writes in the usual form, *Peace be multiplied unto you*. Note, It becomes kings with their commands to disperse their good wishes, and as fathers of their country to bless their subjects. So the common form with us; *We send greeting, Omnibus quibus hæ præsentis literæ pervenerint salutem*; and sometimes *salutem sempiternam*. Health and salvation everlasting.

2. Something of substance and matter. He writes this,

1. To acquaint others with the providences of God that had been concerning him, *ver. 2*. *I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God* (so he calls the true God) *has wrought towards me*. He thought it *seemly*, so the word is, that it was his duty, and did well become him, that it was a debt he owed to God and the world, now he was recovered from his distraction to relate to distant places, and record for future ages how justly God had humbled him, and how graciously he had at length restored him. All the nations, no doubt, had heard what befel Nebuchadnezzar, and rung of it, but he thought it fit that they should have a distinct account of it from himself, that they might know the hand of God in it, and what impressions were made upon his own spirit by it, and might speak of it not as a matter of news, but a matter of religion. The events concerning him were not only wonders to be admired, but signs to be instructed by, signifying to the world that Jehovah is greater than all gods. Note, We ought to shew to others God's dealings with us, both the rebukes we have been under, and the favours we have received; and though the account hereof may reflect disgrace upon ourselves, as this here did upon Nebuchadnezzar, yet we must not conceal it, as long as it may redound to the glory of God. Many will be forward to tell what God has done for their souls, because that turns to their own praise, who care not for telling what God has done against them, and how they deserved it, whereas we ought to give glory to God not only by praising him for his mercies, but by confessing our sins, accepting the punishment of our iniquity, and in both taking shame to ourselves, as this mighty monarch here doth.

2. To shew how much he was himself affected with them, and convinced by them, *ver. 3*. We should always speak of the word and works of God with concern and seriousness, and shew ourselves affected with those great things of God, which we desire others should take notice of.

1. He admires God's doings. He speaks of them as one amazed, *How great are his signs, and how mighty are his wonders!* Nebuchadnezzar was now old, had reigned above forty years, and had seen as much of the world, and the revolutions of it, as most men ever did, and yet never till now when himself was nearly touched was he brought to admire surprising events, as God's signs, and his wonders: Now, *How great, how mighty* are they! Note, The more we see events to be the Lord's doing, and see in them the product of a divine power, and the conduct of a divine wisdom, the more marvellous they will appear in our eyes, *Psal. cxviii. 23. lxvi. 2*.

2. He infers from thence God's dominion. This is that he is at length brought to subscribe to, *His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom*, and not like his own kingdom, which he saw, and long since foresaw in a dream hastening towards a period. He now owns there is a God that governs the world, and has an universal, incontestable, absolute dominion in and over all the affairs of the children of men. And it is the glory of this kingdom that it is *everlasting*; other reigns are confined to one generation, and other dynasties to a few generations, but God's dominion is from generation to generation. It should seem Nebuchadnezzar here refers to what Daniel had foretold of a kingdom which the God of heaven would set up that should never be destroyed, chap. ii. 44. which

which though meant of the kingdom of the Messiah, he understood of the providential kingdom. Thus we may make a profitable *practical* use and application of those *prophetical* scriptures, which yet we do not *fully*, and perhaps not *rightly* take the meaning of.

4. ¶ I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: 5. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed, and the visions of my head troubled me. 6. Therefore made I a decree to bring in all the wise-men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream. 7. Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof. 8. ¶ But at the last Daniel came in before me (whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods) and before him I told the dream, saying, 9. O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof. 10. Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed, I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great. 11. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth. 12. The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. 13. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher, and an holy one came down from heaven. 14. He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches. 15. Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth. 16. Let his heart be changed from mans, and let a beasts heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him. 17. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know, that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. 18. This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen: now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise-men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Nebuchadnezzar, before he relates the judgments of God, that had been brought upon him for his pride, gives an account of the fair warning he had of them before they came, which if he had duly regarded, they might have been prevented. But *therefore* he was told of them, and of the issue of them before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass, by comparing them with the prediction of them, he might see and say, That they were the Lord's doing: and might be brought to believe, That there is a *divine revelation* in the world, as well as a *divine providence*, and that the works of God agree with his word.

Now in the account he here gives of his dream, by which he had notice of what was coming, we may observe,

1. The time when this alarm was given him, *ver. 4.* It was when he was *at rest in his house, and flourishing in his palace.* He had newly conquered Egypt, and with it compleated his victories, and ended his wars, and made himself monarch of all those parts of the world, which was about the thirty-fourth or thirty-fifth year of his reign, *Ezek. xxix. 17.* Then he had this dream, which was accomplished about a year after, seven years his distraction continued, upon his recovery from which he penned this declaration; lived about two years after, and died in his forty-fifth year. He had undergone a long fatigue in his wars, had made many a tedious and dangerous campaign in the field; but now at length he is *at rest in his house*; and there is *no adversary, nor evil accurrent.* Note, God can reach the greatest of men with his

terrors then when they are most secure, and think themselves *at rest and flourishing.*

2. The impression it made upon him, *ver. 5. I saw a dream, which made me afraid.* One would think no little thing would frighten him that had been a man of war from his youth, and used to look the perils of war in the face without change of countenance, yet when God pleaseth, a dream strikes a terror upon him. His bed no doubt was soft and easy, and well guarded, and yet his own *thoughts upon his bed,* make him uneasy, and the *visions of his head,* the creatures of his own imagination, trouble him. Note, God can make the greatest of men *uneasy*, even then when they say to their souls, *Take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry*; can make those that have been the *troublers* of the world, and have *tormented* thousands to be *their own* troublers, *their own* tormenters; and those that have been the terror of the mighty, a terror to themselves. By the consternation which this dream put him into, and the impression it made upon him, he perceived it to be not an ordinary dream, but sent of God on a special errand.

3. His consulting in vain with the magicians and astrologers concerning the meaning of it. He had not now forgot the dream, as before *chap. ii.* He had it ready enough, but he wanted to know the interpretation of it, and what was pre-figured by it, *ver. 6.* Orders are immediately given to summon *all the wise men of Babylon*, that were such *fools* as to pretend by magick, divination, inspecting the entrails of beasts, or observations of the stars to predict things to come. They must all come together, to see if any or all of them in consultation could interpret the king's dream. It is likely these people had sometimes in a like case given the king some sort of satisfaction, and, by the rules of their art, had answered the king's queries, so as to please him, whether it were right or wrong, hit or missed; but now his expectation from them was disappointed, he *told them the dream*, *ver. 7.* But they could not tell him the interpretation of it; though they had boasted with great assurance, *chap. ii. 4, 7.* that if they had but the dream told them, they would without fail *interpret* it. But the key of this dream was in a sacred prophecy, *Ezek. xxxi. 3, &c.* where the Assyrian is compared as Nebuchadnezzar here, to a *tree cut down*, for his pride; and that was a book they had not studied, or acquainted themselves with, else they might have been let into the mystery of this dream. Providence ordered it so, that they should be first puzzled with it, that Daniel's interpreting it afterwards might redound to the glory of the God of Daniel. Now was fulfilled what Isaiah foretold, *chap. xlvii. 12, 13.* that when the ruin of Babylon was drawing on, her *enchantments* and *sorceries*, her *astrologers* and *star-gazers*, should not be able to do her any service.

4. The court he made to Daniel, to engage him to expound his dream to him. *At the last Daniel came in, ver. 8.* Either he declined associating with the rest because of their badness, or they declined his company because of his goodness, or the king would rather his own magicians should have the honour of doing it if they could, than that Daniel should have it: Or Daniel being *governor* of the wisemen, *chap. ii. 48.* was, as is usual, *last consulted.* Many make God's word their last refuge, and never have recourse to it till they are driven off from all other succours. He compliments Daniel very highly, takes notice of the name which he had himself given him, in the choice of which he thinks he was very happy, and that it was a good omen, his name was Belteshazzar, from *Bel*, the *name of my god*; he applauds his rare endowments, he has *the spirit of the holy gods*, so he tells him to his face, *ver. 9.* with which we may suppose Daniel was so far from being puffed up, that he was rather very much grieved, to hear that which he had by gift from the God of Israel, the true and living God, ascribed to Nebuchadnezzar's god, a dunghill deity. Here is a strange medley in Nebuchadnezzar, but such as is commonly found in those that side with their corruptions against their convictions. (1.) He retains the language and dialect of his idolatry, and therefore it is to be feared is no convert to the faith and worship of the living God. He is an idolater, and his speech bewrayeth him. For he speaks of *many gods*, and is not brought to acquiesce in one as *sufficient*, no not in him who is *all-sufficient.* And some think when he speaks of *the spirit of the holy gods*, he supposeth that there are some evil malignant deities, whom men are concerned to worship, only to prevent their doing them a mischief: and some that are good beneficent deities, and that by the spirit of them Daniel was animated. He also owns that Bel was *his God* still, though he had once and again acknowledged the *God of Israel* to be Lord of all, *chap. ii. 47. iii. 20.* He also applauds Daniel, not as a *servant of God*, but as *master of the magicians*, *ver. 9.* supposing his knowledge to differ from theirs, not in kind, but only in *degree*; and he consulted him not as a prophet, but as a topping magician; so endeavouring to save the credit of the art, when those blundered and were nonplussed who were masters of the art. See how *close* his idolatry *sat* to him: he has got a notion of *many gods*, and hath chosen *Bel* for *his god*, and he cannot persuade himself to quit either his notion or his choice, though the absurdity of both had been evidenced to him more than once beyond contradiction. He, like other heathens, would not *change his gods*, though they were *no gods*, *Jer. ii. 11.* Many persist in a false way, only because

because they think they cannot in honour leave it. See how loose his convictions sat; and how easily he had dropped them: he once called the God of Israel a *God of gods*, chap. ii. 47. Now he sets him upon a level with the rest of those whom he calls the *holy gods*. Note, If convictions be not speedily prosecuted, it is a thousand to one but in a little time they are quite lost and forgotten. Nebuchadnezzar not going forward with the acknowledgments he had been brought to make of the sovereignty of the true God, soon went backward, and relapsed to the same veneration he had always had for his false gods. And yet (2.) He professeth a great opinion of Daniel, whom he knows to be a servant of the true God, and of him only. He looked upon him as one that had such an insight, such a foresight as none of his magicians had; *I know that no secret troubleth thee*. Note, The Spirit of prophecy quite out-does the spirit of divination, even the enemies themselves being judges, for so it was adjudged here upon a fair trial of skill.

5. The particular account he gives him of his dream:

1. He saw a stately flourishing tree, remarkable above all the trees of the wood. This tree was *planted in the midst of the earth*, ver. 10. fitly representing him who reigned in Babylon, which was about the midst of the then known world: his dignity and eminency above all his neighbours was signified by the height of this tree, which was *exceeding great, it reached unto heaven*: he overtopped those about him, and aimed to have divine honours given him: nay, he over-powered those about him; and the potent armies he had the command of, with which he carried all before him, is signified by the strength of this tree: it *grew and was strong*. And so much was Nebuchadnezzar and his growing greatness the talk of the nations, so much had they their eye upon him; some a jealous eye, all a wondering eye, that the fight of this tree is said to be *to the end of all the earth*. This tree had every thing in it that was pleasant to the eye, and good for food, ver. 12. *The leaves thereof were fair*; noting the pomp and splendor of Nebuchadnezzar's court, which was the wonder of strangers, and the glory of his own subjects. Nor was this tree for sight and state only, but for use. (1.) For protection; the boughs of it were for shelter, both to the beasts and to the fowls. Princes should be a screen to their subjects *from the heat and from the storm*, should expose themselves to secure them, and study how to make them safe and easy: if the bramble be *promoted over the trees*, he invites them to come and *trust in his shadow*, such as it is. Judg. ix. 15. It is *protection that draws allegiance*. The kings of the earth are to their subjects but as the *shadow of a great tree*; but Christ is to his subjects as the *shadow of a great rock*, Isa. xxxii. 2. Nay, because that tho' strong, yet may be cold, they are said to be hid under the *shadow of his wings*, Psal. xvii. 8. where they are not only safe, but warm. (2.) For provision. The Assyrian was compared to a cedar, Ezek. xxxi. 6. which affords shadow only; but this tree here *had much fruit*, in it was *meat for all*, and *all flesh was fed of it*. This mighty monarch, it should seem by this, not only *was great*, but *did good*; he did not impoverish, but enrich his country, and by his power and interest abroad, brought wealth and trade to it. They that *exercise authority* would be called *benefactors*, Luke xxii. 25. and the most effectual course they can take to support their authority, is to be really *benefactors*. And see what is the best that great men with their wealth and power can attain to, and that is to have the honour of having many to *live upon them*, and to be maintained by them; for *as goods are increased, they are increased that eat them*.

2. He heard the doom of this tree read; which he perfectly remembered, and relates it here, perhaps, word for word as he heard it. The sentence was passed upon it by an angel, whom he saw *come down from heaven*, and heard him proclaim this sentence aloud. This angel is here called a *watcher*, or *watchman*; not only because angels by their nature are spirits, and therefore neither *slumber nor sleep*; but because by their office they are *ministering spirits*, and attend continually to their ministrations, *watching* all opportunities of serving their great Master. They as *watchers* encamp round them that *fear God* to deliver them; and *bear them up in their hands*. This angel was a *messenger*, or *ambassador*, so some read it; and a *holy one*. *Holiness becomes God's house*, therefore angels that attend, and are employed by him, are *holy ones*, they preserve the purity and rectitude of their nature, and are in every thing conformable to the divine will.

Let us review the doom passed upon the tree.

1. Orders are given that it be *cut down*, ver. 14. now also *the ax is laid to the root* of this tree. Tho' it is never so high, never so strong, that cannot secure it, when its day comes to fall; the beasts and fowls that are sheltered in and under the boughs of it, are driven away and dispersed: the branches are *cropped*, the *leaves shaken off*, and the *fruit scattered*. Note, Worldly prosperity in its highest degree is a very uncertain thing; and it is no uncommon thing for those that have lived in the greatest pomp and power, to be stripped of all that which they trusted to and gloried in. By the turns of providence, those that made a figure become captives; that lived in plenty, and above what they had, are reduced to straits, and live far below what

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they had; and these perhaps are brought to be beholden to others who when time was, had many depending upon them, and making suit to them. But the *trees of righteousness* that are *planted in the house of the Lord*, and bring forth fruit to him; shall not be cut down, nor shall their *leaf wither*.

2. Care is taken that the root be preserved, ver. 15. *Leave the stump of it in the earth*, exposed to all weathers, there let it lie neglected, and buried *in the grass*, let the beasts that formerly sheltered themselves under the boughs, now repose themselves upon the stump; but that it may not be raked to pieces, or trodden to dirt, and to shew that it is yet reserved for better days, let it be hooped round with a *band of iron and brass* to keep it firm. Note, God in judgment remembers mercy; and may yet have good things in store for those whose condition seems most forlorn. There is *hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, that through the scent of water, it will bud*, Job xiv. 7, 8, 9.

3. The meaning of this is explained by the angel himself to Nebuchadnezzar, ver. 16. whoever is the person signified by this tree, he is sentenced to be deposed from the honour, state, and dignity, of a man, to be deprived of the use of his reason, and to be and live like a brute till *seven times pass over him, let a beast's heart be given unto him*. This is surely the saddest and forest of all temporal judgments, worse a thousand times than death, and tho', like it, least felt by those that lie under it, yet to be dreaded and deprecated, more than any other. Nay, Whatever outward affliction God is pleased to lay upon us, we have reason to bear it patiently, and to be thankful that he continues to us the *use of our reason*, and the *peace of our consciences*. But those proud tyrants who *set their heart as the heart of God*, Ezek. xxviii. 2. justly may be deprived of the *heart of man*, and have a *beast's heart* given them.

4. The truth of it is confirmed, ver. 17. *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones*. God has determined it, as a righteous judge, he has signed this edict, pursuant to his eternal counsel, the decree is gone forth: And (1.) The angels in heaven have subscribed to it; as attesting it, approving it, and applauding it. It is by *the decree of the watchers*; not that the great God needs the counsel or concurrence of the angels in any thing he determines or doth, but as he useth their ministration in executing his counsels, so he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he advised with them; *whom shall I send? Isa. vi. 8. who shall persuade Abab? 1 Kings xxii. 20.* so it notes the solemnity of this sentence: the kings breves, or short writs, pass, *Teste me ipso*, but charters used to be signed, *His testibus*, *In presence of us whose names are under-written*, such was Nebuchadnezzar's doom, it was by the *decree of the watchers*. (2.) The saints on earth petitioned for it, as well as the angels in heaven; *the demand is by the word of the holy ones*. God's suffering people that had long groaned under the heavy yoke of Nebuchadnezzar's tyranny, cried to him for vengeance; they made the demand; and God gave this answer to it; for when the *oppressed cry to God, he will hear*, Exod. xxii. 27. This sentence was passed in Ahab's time, that there should be no more rain, at Elijah's word, when he *made intercession against Israel*, 1 Kings xvii. 1.

4. The design of it is declared; therefore orders are given for the cutting down of this tree, *to the intent, that the living may know that the most High rules*. This judgment must be executed to convince the unthinking, unbelieving, world, that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, a God that governs the world, that not only has a kingdom of his own in it, and administers the affairs of that kingdom, but *rules also in the kingdom of men*, in the dominion that one man has over another, and *giveth that to whomsoever he will*, from him promotion comes, Psal. lxxv. 6, 7. He advanceth men to power and dominion that little expected it, and crosseth the projects of the ambitious and aspiring. Sometimes he *sets up the basest of men*, and serves his own purposes by them; mean men, as David from the sheep-fold, *raiseth the poor out of the dust, to set them among princes*, Psal. cxiii. 7, 8. Nay, sometimes he sets up *ill men*, to be a scourge to a provoking people. Thus he can do, thus he may do, thus he often doth and *gives not account of any of his matters*. By humbling Nebuchadnezzar it was designed, that the living should be made to know this. The dead know it, that are gone to the world of spirits, the world of retribution, they know that *the most High rules*; but the living must be made to *know it*, and lay it to heart, that they may make their peace with God before it be too late.

Thus has Nebuchadnezzar fully and faithfully related his dream, what he saw, and what he heard; and then demands of Daniel the interpretation of it, ver. 18. for he found no one else was able to do it, but is confident he was, for *the spirit of the holy gods is in thee*, or, of the *holy God*; the proper title of the God of Israel. Much may be expected from those that have in them the *Spirit of the holy God*. Whether Nebuchadnezzar had any jealousy that it was his own doom that was read by this dream, doth not appear: perhaps he was so vain and secure as to imagine, that it was some other prince that was a rival with him, whose fall he had the pleasing prospect of given him in this dream; but be it for him or against him, he is

very solicitous to know the true meaning of it, and depends upon Daniel to give it him. Note, When God gives us general warnings of his judgments, we should be desirous to understand his mind in them, to hear *the Lord's voice crying in the city*.

19. ¶ Then Daniel (whose name was Belteshazzar) was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him: the king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered and said, My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies. 20. The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; 21. Whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: 22. It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth. 23. And whereas the king saw a watcher, and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brags in the tender grafs of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him; 24. This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: 25. That they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee, to eat grafs as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 26. And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree-roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. 27. Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

We have here the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream; which when once it is applied to himself, and it is declared that he is *the tree* in the dream, *Mutato nomine de te fabula narratur*, when once it is said, *thou art the man*, there needs little more to be said, for the explication of the dream, *out of his own mouth he is judged; so shall his doom be, himself has decided it*. The thing was so plain, that Daniel, upon hearing the dream, was astonished for one hour, ver. 19. He was struck with amazement, and a terror of so great a judgment coming upon so great a prince; his *flesh trembled for fear of God*. He was likewise struck with confusion, when he found himself under a necessity of being the man that must bring to the king *these heavy tidings*, which having received so many favours from the king, he had rather he should have heard from any one else; so far is he from desiring the woful day, that he dreads it, and the *thoughts* of it trouble him. *They that come after the ruined sinner, are said to be astonished at his day, as they that went before, and saw it coming, as Daniel here, were affrighted*, Job xviii. 20.

1. The preface to the interpretation is a civil compliment, which as a courtier he passeth upon the king. The king observed him to stand as one astonished, and thinking he was loth to speak out for fear of offending him, he encouraged him to deal plainly and faithfully with him. *Let not the dream or the interpretation thereof trouble thee*. This he speaks either, (1.) As one that sincerely desired to know the truth. Note, Those that consult the oracles of God must be ready to receive them as they are, whether they be for them or against them, and must accordingly give their ministers leave to be free with them. Or, (2.) As one that despised the truth, and set it at defiance; when we see how regardless he was of this warning, afterwards we are tempted to think this was his meaning; *Let it not trouble thee, for I am resolved it shall not trouble me; nor will I lay it to heart*. But whether he have any concern for himself or no, Daniel is concerned for him, and therefore wishes, *The dream be to them that hate thee*. Let the ill it bodes light on the head of thine enemies, not on thine head. Tho' Nebuchadnezzar was an idolater, a persecutor, and an oppressor of the people of God, yet he was at present Daniel's prince, and therefore, tho'

he foresees, and is now going to foretel ill concerning him, he dares not wish ill to him.

2. The interpretation it self is only a repetition of the dream with application to the king. As for *the tree* which thou sawest flourishing, ver. 20, 21. *It is thou, O king*, ver. 22. And willing enough would the king be to hear this, as before to hear, *Thou art the head of gold*, but for that which follows. He shews the king his present prosperous state in the glass of his own dream; *thy greatness is grown and reacheth as near heaven*, 23. human greatness can do, and *thy dominion is to the end of the earth*, chap. ii. 37, 38. As for the doom passed upon the tree, ver. 23. It is *the decree of the most High, which comes upon my lord the king*, ver. 24. He must not only be deposed from his throne, but driven from men, and being deprived of his reason, and having a *beast's heart* given him, his dwelling shall be with *the beasts of the field*, and with them he shall be a fellow-companion, he shall eat grafs as oxen, and like them lie out all weathers, and be wet with the dew of heaven; and this till seven times pass over him, i. e. seven years, and then he shall know that the most High rules: and when he is brought to know and own that, he shall be restored to his dominion again, ver. 26. *Thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee*, shall remain as firm as the stump of the tree in the ground, and thou shalt have it, after thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule. God is here called *the heavens*, because it is in heaven that he hath prepared his throne; Psal. ciii. 19. from thence he beholdeth all the sons of men, Psal. xxxiii. 13. The heavens, even the heavens are the Lord's; and the influence which the visible heavens have upon this earth is intended as a faint representation of the dominion the God of heaven has over this lower world; we are said to *sin against heaven*, Luke xv. 18. Note, Then only we may expect comfortably to enjoy our right in, and government of both our selves and others when we dutifully acknowledge God's title to, and dominion over, us and all we have.

3. The close of the interpretation is the pious counsel which Daniel, as a prophet, gave the king, ver. 27. whether he appeared concerned or not at the interpretation of the dream, a word of advice would be very seasonable; if careless to awaken him, if troubled, to comfort him: and it is not inconsistent with the dream, and the interpretation of it, for Daniel knew not but it might be conditional, like the prediction of Nineveh's destruction. Observe, (1.) How humbly he gives his advice, and with what tenderness and respect. *O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee*, take it in good part, as coming from love, and well meant, and let it not be misinterpreted. Note, Sinners need to be courted to their own good and spoken fair to do well for themselves. The apostle beseeches men to *suffer a word of exhortation*, Heb. xiii. 22. We think it a good point gained if people will be persuaded to take good counsel kindly; nay, if they will take it patiently. (2.) What his advice is, he doth not counsel him to enter into a course of physick, for the preventing of the distemper in his head, but to break off a course of sin that he was in; to reform his life: he wronged his own subjects, and dealt unfairly with his allies, and he must break off this by righteousness, by rendring to all their due, making amends for wrong done, and not triumphing over right with might: he had been cruel to the poor, to God's poor, to the poor Jews, and he must break off this iniquity by shewing mercy to those poor, pitying those oppressed ones, setting them at liberty, or making their captivity easy to them. Note, It is necessary in repentance, that we not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well; not only do no wrong to any, but do good to all. (3.) What the motive is, with which he backs this advice; *if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity*. Tho' it should not wholly prevent the judgment, yet by this means a reprieve may be obtained, as by *Ahab's humbling himself*, 1 Kings xxi. 29. either the trouble may be the longer before it comes, or the shorter when it doth come; yet he cannot assure him of this, but it may be it may prove so. Note, The very probability of preventing a temporal judgment, is inducement enough to a work so good in it self, as the leaving of our sins, and reforming of our lives, much more the certainty of preventing our eternal ruin. *That will be a healing of thine error*, so some read it; thus the quarrel will be taken up, and all will be well again.

28. ¶ All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. 29. At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. 30. The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? 31. While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee. 32. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grafs as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.

men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. 33. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar; and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles feathers, and his nails like birds claws.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's dream accomplished, and Daniel's application of it to him justified and confirmed. How he took it we are not told, whether he was pleased with Daniel, or displeased; but here we have,

1. God's patience with him; all this *came upon him*, but not till *twelve months after*, ver. 29. so long there was a *lengthening of his tranquillity*, tho' it doth not appear, that he *broke off his sins*, or shewed any *mercy to the poor captives*, for this was still God's quarrel with him, that he *opened not the house of his prisoners*, Isa. xiv. 17. Daniel having counselled him to repent, God so far confirmed his word, that he gave him *space to repent*; let him *alone this year also*, this one year more; before he brought this judgment upon him. Note, God is therefore long-suffering with provoking sinners, because he is not willing that *any should perish*, but that *all should come to repentance*, 2 Pet. iii. 9.

2. His pride and haughtiness, and abuse of that patience. He walked *upon the palace of the kingdom of Babylon*, in pomp and pride, pleasing himself with the view of that vast city, which, with all the territories thereunto belonging, was under his command, and he said, either to himself, or to those about him, perhaps some foreigners to whom he was shewing his kingdom, and the glory of it, *Is not this great Babylon?* Yes, it is great, of vast extent, no less than forty five miles compass within the walls. It is full of inhabitants, and they full of wealth; it is a *golden city*, and that is enough to speak it great, Isa. xiv. 4. See the grandeur of the houses, walls, towers, and publick edifices; every thing in Babylon he thinks *looks great*; and this *great Babylon I have built*. Babylon was built many ages before he was born, but because he had *fortified and beautified* it, and we may suppose much of it was *rebuilt* during his long and prosperous reign, he boasts that he has built it; as Augustus Cæsar boasted concerning Rome, *Lateritiam inveni, marmoream reliqui*: he boasts that he built it *for the house of the kingdom*, i. e. the metropolis of his empire. This vast city, compared with the countries that belonged to his dominions, was but as one house: he built it with the assistance of his subjects, yet boasts that he did it *by the might of his power*; he built it for his security and convenience, yet, as if he had no occasion for it, boasts that he built it *purely for the honour of his majesty*. Note, Pride and self-conceit is a sin that most easily besets *great men*, who have *great things* in the world. They are apt to take the glory to themselves which is due to God only.

3. His punishment for his pride. When he was thus strutting and vaunting himself, and adoring his own shadow, *while the proud word was in the king's mouth*, the powerful word came from heaven, by which he was immediately deprived, (1.) Of his honour as a king; *The kingdom is departed from thee*, when he thought he had erected impregnable bulwarks for the preserving of his kingdom, now, in an instant it is *departed from him*; when he thought it so well guarded, that none could take it from him, behold it departs of it self. As soon as he becomes utterly incapable to manage it, it is of course taken out of his hands. (2.) He is deprived of his honour as a man, he loseth his reason, and by that means loseth his dominion; *they shall drive thee from men*, ver. 32. And it was fulfilled, ver. 33. he was *driven from men*, the same hour, i. e. On a sudden he fell stark mad, distracted in the highest degree that ever any man was. His understanding and memory were gone, and all the faculties of a rational soul broken, so that he became a perfect brute in the shape of a man. He went naked, and on all four like a brute: did himself shun the society of reasonable creatures, and run wild in the fields and woods: and was driven out by his own servants, who after some time of trial, despairing of his return to his right mind, abandoned him, and looked after him no more. He had not the spirit of a beast of prey, not that of the royal lion, but of the abject and less honourable species, for he was made to *eat grass as oxen*; and probably he did not speak with human voice, but lowed like an ox. Some think his body was all covered with hair, however, *the hair of his head and beard* being never cut or combed, grew like *eagles feathers*, and *his nails like birds claws*.

Let us pause a little and view this miserable spectacle; and let us receive instruction from it. (1.) Let us see here what a mercy it is to have the use of our reason, how thankful we ought to be for it, and how careful we ought to be, not to do any thing which may either provoke God, or may have a natural tendency to put us *out of the possession of our own souls*. Let us learn how to value our own reason, and to pity the case of those that are under the prevailing power of melancholy, or distraction, or are delirious, and to be very tender in our censures of them, and carriage towards them, for it is a temptation common to men, and a case which some time or other may be our own. (2.) Let us see here the vanity of human glory and greatness; is this Nebuchad-

nezzar the Great? What this despicable animal, that is meaner than the poorest beggar? Is this he that looked so glorious in the throne, so formidable in the camp, that had politicks enough to subdue and govern kingdoms, and now hath not so much sense as to keep his own clothes on his back; *Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms?* Isa. xiv. 16. Never let the *wise man* then *glory in his wisdom*, or the *mighty man in his strength*. (3.) Let us see here how God *resists the proud*, and delights to abase them, and put contempt upon them. Nebuchadnezzar would be *more than a man*, and therefore God justly makes him *less than a man*; and puts him upon a level with the beasts, that set up for a rival with his Maker. See Job xl. 11, 12, 13.

34. And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lift up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation. 35. And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? 36. At the same time my reason returned unto me, and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. 37. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

We have here Nebuchadnezzar's recovery from his distraction, and his return to his right mind, *at the end of the days* prefixed, i. e. of the seven years; so long he continued a monument of God's justice, and a trophy of his victory over the children of pride; and he was made more so by being *struck mad*, than if he had been in an instant *struck dead* with a thunderbolt. Yet it was a mercy to him that he was kept alive, for while there is life there is hope, that we may yet praise God, as he did here. *At the end of the days*, (saith he) *I lift up mine eyes unto heaven*, ver. 34. looked no longer down towards the earth as a beast, but began to look up as a man; *as homini sublime dedit*. But there was more in it than so; he looked up as a *devout man*, as a penitent, as a humble petitioner for mercy, being perhaps never till now made sensible of his own misery. And now,

1. He hath the use of his reason so far restored to him, that with it he glorifies God, and humbles himself under his mighty hand. He was told, that he should continue in that forlorn case, till he should know *that the most High rules*, and here we have him brought to the knowledge of that; *mine understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High*. Note, Those may justly be reckoned void of understanding that do not bless and praise God, nor do men ever rightly use their reason till they begin to be religious, nor live as men, till they live to the glory of God. As reason is the *substratum*, or subject of religion, so that creatures which have no reason, are not capable of religion; so religion is the crown and glory of reason, and we have our reason in vain, and shall one day wish we had never had it, if we do not *glorify* God with it. This was the first act of Nebuchadnezzar's returning reason, and when this became the employment of it, he was then, and not till then, qualified for all the other enjoyments of it. And till he was for a great while disabled to exercise it in other things, he never was brought to apply it to this, which is the great end for which our reason is given us. His folly was the means whereby he became wise; he was not recovered by his dream of this judgment, that was soon forgotten like a dream, but he is made to feel it, and then his *ear is opened to discipline*. To bring him to himself he must first be *beside himself*. And by this it appears, that what good thoughts there were in his mind, and what good work was wrought there, was not of himself; for he was not his own man, but it was the gift of God.

Let us see what Nebuchadnezzar is now at length effectually brought to the acknowledgment of; and we may learn from it *what to believe concerning God*.

1. That the *most high God lives for ever*, and his being knows neither change nor period, for he has it of himself: His flatterers often complimented him with, *O king, live for ever*, but he is now convinced there is no king *lives for ever*, but the God of Israel only, who is still the same.

2. That his kingdom is like himself *everlasting*, and his *dominion from generation to generation*; there is no succession, no revolution in his kingdom: As he lives, so he reigns, for ever, and of his government there is no end.

3. That *all nations* before him are *as nothing*; he has no need of them, he makes no account of them. The greatest of men in comparison with him are less than nothing. Those that think highly of God, think meanly of themselves.

4. That

4. That his kingdom is universal, and both *the armies of heaven*, and the *inhabitants of the earth* are his subjects, and under his check and controul. Both angels and men are employed by him, and accountable to him; the highest angel is not above his command, nor the meanest of the children of men beneath his cognizance. The angels of heaven are *his armies*, the *inhabitants of the earth* his tenants.

5. That his power is irresistible, and his sovereignty uncontrollable, for he doth *according to his will*, according to his design and purpose, according to his decree and counsel; whatever he pleaseth that he doth; whatever he appointeth that he performeth; and none can resist his will, change his counsel, or *stay his hand*, or say unto him, *what dost thou?* none can arraign his proceedings, enquire into the meaning of them, or demand a reason for them. Wo to him that strives with his Maker; that saith to him, *What dost thou?* or, *Why dost thou so?*

6. That every thing that God doth is well done, his *works are truth*, for they all agree with his word. *His ways are judgment* both wise and righteous, exactly consonant to the rules both of prudence and equity, and no fault to be found with them.

7. That he has power to humble the haughtiest of his enemies that act in contradiction to him, or competition with him; *those that walk in pride he is able to abase them*, ver. 37. he is able to deal with those that are most confident of their own sufficiency to contend with him.

2. He has the use of his reason so far restored to him, as with it to re-enjoy himself, and the pleasures of his re-established prosperity, ver. 36. *At the same time my reason returned to me*; he had said before, ver. 34. that his *understanding returned* to him, and here he mentions it again, for the use of our reason is a mercy we can never be enough thankful for. Now *his lords fought to him*, he did not need to seek to them, and they soon perceived, not only that he had recovered his reason, and was fit to rule, but that he had recovered it with advantage, and was *more fit to rule than ever*. It is likely the dream and the interpretation of it was well known, and much talked of at court; and the former part of the prediction being fulfilled, that he should go distracted, they doubted not but that according to the prediction he should come to himself again, at seven years end; and in confidence of that when the time was expired were ready to receive him; and then *his honour and brightness returned to him*, the same he had before his madness seized him. He is now *established in his kingdom* as firm as if there had been no such interruption given him; *he becomes a fool that he may be wise*, wiser than ever; and he that but the other day was in the depth of disgrace and ignominy, has now *excellent majesty added to him*, beyond what he had when he went from kingdom to kingdom conquering, and to conquer. Note, 1. When men are brought to honour God, particularly by a penitent confession of sin, and a believing acknowledgment of his sovereignty, then, and not till then, they may expect that God will put honour upon them; will not only restore them to the dignity they lost by the sin of the first Adam, but *add excellent majesty to them* from the righteousness and grace of the second Adam.

2. Afflictions shall last no longer than till they have done the work for which they were sent. When this prince is brought to own God's dominion over him, he is then restored to a dominion over himself. 3. All the accounts we take and give of God's dealing with us ought to conclude with praises to him. When Nebuchadnezzar is restored to his kingdom, he *praises and extols and honours the King of heaven*, ver. 37. before he applies himself to his secular business. Therefore we have our reason, that we may be in a *capacity* of praising him, and therefore our prosperity, that we may have *cause* to praise him.

It was not long after this that Nebuchadnezzar ended his life and reign; Abydenus quoted by Eusebius (*Præp. Evang.* l. 9.) reports from the tradition of the Chaldeans, that upon his death-bed he foretold the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. Whether he continued in the same good mind that here he seems to have been in, we are not told, nor doth any thing appear to the contrary but that he did; and if so great a *blasphemer and persecutor* did find mercy, he was not the last. And if our charity may reach so far as to hope he did, we must admire free grace, by which he *lost his wits* for a while that he might *save his soul* for ever.

C H A P. V.

The destruction of the kingdom of Babylon had been long and oft foretold when it was at a distance: In this chapter we have it accomplished, and a prediction of it the very same night that it was accomplished. Belshazzar now reigned in Babylon; some compute he had reigned seventeen years, others but three; we have here the story of his exit, and the period of his kingdom. We must know, that about two years before this Cyrus king of Persia, a growing monarch, came against Babylon with a great army. Belshazzar met him, fought him, and was routed by him in a pitched battle. - He and his scattered forces retired into the city,

where Cyrus besieged them: They were very secure, because the river Euphrates was their bulwark, and they had twenty years provision in the city; but in the second year of the siege he took it, as is here related: We have in this chapter, (1.) The riotous, idolatrous, sacrilegious feast which Belshazzar made, in which he filled up the measure of his iniquity, ver. 1—4. (2.) The alarm given him in the midst of his jollity by a hand-writing on the wall, which none of his wise men could read or tell him the meaning of, ver. 5—9. (3.) The interpretation of the mystical characters by Daniel, who was at length brought in to him, and dealt plainly with him, and shewed him his doom written, ver. 10—28. (4.) The immediate accomplishment of the interpretation in the slaying of the king, and seizing of the kingdom, ver. 30, 31.

1. **B**elshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. 2. Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem, that the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines might drink therein. 3. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of GOD, which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king and his princes, his wives and his concubines drank in them. 4. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. 5. ¶ In the same hour came forth fingers of a mans hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the kings palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. 6. Then the kings countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loyns were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. 7. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the sooth-sayers: and the king spake and said to the wise-men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom. 8. Then came in all the kings wise-men, but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof. 9. Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

We have here Belshazzar the king very *gay*, but all of a sudden very *chagrin*, and in straits in the fulness of his sufficiency. See how he *affronts* God, and God *affrights* him, and wait what will be the issue of this contest; and whether he that hardened his heart against God prospered.

1. See how the king *affronted* God, and put contempt upon him. He *made a great feast*, or *banquet of wine*; probably, it was some anniversary solemnity, in honour of his birth-day, or coronation day, or of some of their idols; historians say, That Cyrus, who was now with his army besieging Babylon, knew of this feast, and presuming that they then would be off their guard, *somno vinoque sepulsi*, took that opportunity to attack the city, and so with the more ease made himself master of it. Belshazzar upon this occasion invited a *thousand of his lords* to come and drink with him: Perhaps they were such as had signalized themselves in defence of the city against the besiegers; or these were his great council of war, with whom, when they had well drunk, he would advise what was further to be done. And they were to look upon it as a great favour that he *drank wine before* them, for it was the pride of those eastern kings to be seldom seen. He *drank wine before* them, for he made this feast, as Ahasuerus did to shew the *honour of his majesty*.

Now in this sumptuous feast,

1. He put an affront upon the *providence of God*, and bid defiance to his judgments. His city was now besieged, a powerful enemy was at his gates, his life and kingdom lay at stake: In all this the hand of the Lord was gone out against him, and by it he called him to *weeping and mourning*, and *girding with sackcloth*, God's voice cried in the city as Jonah to Nineveh, *yet forty days, or fewer, and Babylon shall be destroyed*; he should therefore like the king of Nineveh have *proclaimed a fast*; but, as one resolved to walk contrary to God, he proclaims a feast, and behold joy and gladness, *slaying oxen, killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine*, as if he dared the Almighty to do his worst, *Isa.* xxii. 12, 13. To shew how little fear he had of being forced to surrender for want of provisions, he spent thus extravagantly. Note, Security and sensuality are sad presages of approaching ruin. Those that will not be warned by the judgments of God, may expect to be wounded by them.

2. He put an affront upon *the temple of God*, and bid defiance to his sanctuary, *ver. 2. while he tasted the wine he commanded to bring the vessels of the temple, that they might drink in them.* When he tasted how rich and fine the wine was, O, said he, it is pity but we should have *holy vessels* to drink such *delicate wine* as this in; which was looked upon as a piece of wit, and to carry on the humour, the vessels of the temple were presently sent for. Nay, there seems to have been something more in it than a frolick, and that it was done in a malicious despite to the God of Israel; the heart of his people was very much upon these sacred vessels, as appears by *Jer. xxvii. 16, 18.* Their principal care in their return was about these, *Ezra i. 7.* Now we may suppose they had an expectation of their deliverance approaching, reckoning the seventy years of their captivity near a period, and some of them might perhaps have given out some words to that purpose, that shortly they should have the vessels of the sanctuary restored to them, in defiance of which Belshazzar here proclaims them to be *his own*, will keep them *in store* no longer, but make use of them among *his own plate.* Note, That mirth is sinful indeed, and fills the measure of mens iniquity apace, which profanes sacred things, and jests with them. This ripened Babylon for ruin that no songs would serve them but the *songs of Zion*, *Psal. cxxxvii. 3.* no vessels but the vessels of the sanctuary. Let those who thus sacrilegiously alienate what is dedicated to God and his honour, know that he *will not be mocked.*

3. He put an affront upon *God himself*, and bid defiance to his deity; for *they drunk wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver,* *ver. 4.* They gave that glory to images, the work of their own hands, and creatures of their own fancy, which is due to the true and living God only. They praised them either with sacrifices offered to them, or with songs sung in honour of them. When their heads were giddy, and their hearts merry with wine, they were in the fittest frame to *praise the gods of gold and silver, wood and stone*; for one would think men in their senses, that had the command of a clear and sober thought, could not be guilty of so gross an absurdity; they must be *intoxicated* ere they could be so *infatuated.* *Drunken worshippers* that are not *men* but *beasts*, are the most proper for the service of *dunghil deities*, that are not *gods*, but *devils.* *They have erred through wine,* *Isa. xxviii. 7.* *They drunk wine and praised their idol gods,* as if they had been the founders of their feast, and the givers of all good things to them. Or, when they were *drinking wine*, they *praised their gods* by drinking healths to them, and the king *drank wine before them, ver. 1.* i. e. he began the health, first to this god, and then to the other, till they went through the *beed-roll* or *farrago* of them, those of *wood and stone* not excepted. Note, Immorality and impiety, vice and profaneness, strengthen the hands, and advance the interests one of another. *Drunken frolicks* were an introduction to idolatry, and then idolatrous healths were a shoeing-horn to further drunkenness.

2. See how God *affrighted* the king, and struck a terror upon him. Belshazzar and his lords are in the midst of their revels, the cups going round apace, and all upon the merry pin, drinking confusion, it may be, to Cyrus and his army, and roaring out *huzzas* in confidence of the speedy raising of the siege; but the hour was come when that must be fulfilled, which had been long ago said of the king of Babylon, when his city should be besieged by the Persians and Medes, *Isa. xxi. 2, 3, 4.* *The night of my pleasures has he turned into fear to me.* The mirth of this ball at court must be spoiled, and a damp cast upon their jollity, though the king himself be *master of the revels*; presently, when God speaks the word, we have him and all his guests in the utmost confusion, and the end of their mirth heaviness.

1. There appear the *fingers of a man's hand-writing on the plaster of the wall*, before the king's face, *ver. 5.* The angel Gabriel, say the rabbins, directing these fingers and writing by them. "That divine hand (saith a rabbin of our own, Dr "Lightfoot) that had written the two tables for a law to his "people, now writes the doom of Babel and Belshazzar upon "the wall." Here was nothing sent to frighten them which made a noise, or threatened their lives; no claps of thunder, or flashes of lightning; no destroying angel with his sword drawn in his hand; only a pen in the hand, writing upon the wall, *over against the candlestick*, where they might all see it by the light of their own candle. Note, God's written word is sufficient to put the proudest, boldest, sinners into a fright, when he is pleased to give it the setting on. The king saw *the part of the hand that wrote*, but saw not the person whose hand it was, which made the thing more frightful. Note, What we see of God, the *part of the hand that writes* in the book of the creatures, and the book of the scriptures, (*Lo, these are parts of his ways, Job xxvi. 14.*) may serve to possess us with awful thoughts concerning that of God which we do not see. If this be the *finger of God*, what is his arm made bare? And what is he?

2. The king is immediately seized with a panick fear, *ver. 6.* *His countenance was changed*; his colour went and came, *the joints of his loins were loosed*, so that he had no strength in them, but was struck with a pain in his back, as is usual in a great fright; *his knees smote one against another*, so violently did he

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tremble, like an aspen leaf. But what was the matter? Why is he in such a fright? He perceives not what is written, and how doth he know but it may be some happy presage of deliverance to him and to his kingdom? But the business was, *His thoughts troubled him*; his own guilty conscience flew in his face, and told him, He had no reason to expect any good news from heaven, and that the hand of an angel could write nothing but terror to him: he that knew himself liable to the justice of God presently concludes this is an arrest in his name, a summons to appear before him. Note, God can soon awaken the most secure, and make the heart of the stoutest sinner to tremble; and there needs no more to do it but to let loose *his own thoughts* upon him, they will soon play the tyrant, and give him trouble enough.

3. The wise men of Babylon are presently called in to see what they can make of this writing upon the wall, *ver. 7.* The king *cried aloud* as one in haste, as one in earnest, to bring the whole college of magicians; to try if they can *read this writing*, and *shew the interpretation of it*: for the king and all his lords cannot pretend to it, it is out of their sphere; the study of divine revelation (such as they had, or thought they had) and converse with the world of spirits, was by the heathen confined to one profession, and none other meddled with it; but what is written to us by the finger of God, is legible to all; whoever will, may read the mind of God in the scriptures. To engage these wise men to exert the utmost of their skill in this matter, and provoke them to an emulation in the attempt, he promiseth, that whoever would give him a satisfactory account of this writing, should be dignified with the highest honours of the court: he knew what these pretenders to wisdom aimed at, and what would please them, and therefore promiseth them a *scarlet robe*, and a *gold chain*, glorious things in their eyes that know no better. Nay, he should be *Primus Par Regni*, chief minister of state, *the third ruler* in the kingdom, next to the king and his heir apparent.

4. The king is disappointed in his expectations from them; they could none of them *read the writings*; much less interpret it, *ver. 8.* which increaseth the king's confusion, *ver. 9.* he likes the thing yet worse and worse, and fears that mischief is towards him. *His lords* also, that had been partners with him in his jollity, are now sharers with him in his terrors; they also were *astonied* and at their wit's end; and neither their numbers nor their refreshment by wine would serve to keep up their spirits. The reason why the *wise men* could not read the writing, was not because it was written in any language or characters unknown to them, but God either cast a mist before their eyes, or put such confusion upon their spirits, that they could not read it; that the honour of expounding this mystical writing might be reserved for Daniel. Note, The terror of an awakened, convinced conscience, may justly be increased by the utter insufficiency of all creatures to give it ease or satisfaction.

10. ¶ Now the queen by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house; and the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed. 11. There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, and in the days of thy father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; 12. Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. 13. Then was Daniel brought in before the king; and the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel, which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry? 14. I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light, and understanding, and excellent wisdom is found in thee. 15. And now the wise-men, the astrologers have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof: but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing. 16. And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom. 17. ¶ Then

17. ¶ Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thy self, and give thy rewards to another, yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation. 18. O thou king, the most high GOD gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour. 19. And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down. 20. But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. 21. And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the most high GOD ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. 22. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this: 23. But hast lifted up thy self against the LORD of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines have drunk wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the GOD in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified. 24. Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and this writing was written. 25. ¶ And this is the writing that was written, MENE MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN. 26. This is the interpretation of the thing; MENE, God hath numbred thy kingdom, and finished it. 27. TEKEL, thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. 28. PERES, thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. 29. Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Here is, 1. The information given to the king, by the queen-mother concerning Daniel, how fit he was to be consulted in this difficult case. It is supposed this queen was the widow of Evil-Merodach, and was that famous Nitocris, whom Herodotus mentions as a woman of extraordinary prudence. She was not present at the feast, as the kings wives and concubines were, ver. 2. It was not agreeable to her age and gravity to keep a merry night. But tidings of the fright which the king and his lords were put into, being brought to her apartment, she came herself to the banquetting-house, to recommend to the king a physician for his melancholy. She bespeaks him not to be discouraged by the insufficiency of his wife men to solve this riddle, for there was a man in his kingdom that had more than once helped his grandfather at such a dead lift, and no doubt could help him, ver. 11, 12. She could not undertake to read the writing herself, but directs him to one that could; let Daniel be called now who should have been called first. Now observe,

(1.) The high character she gives of Daniel. He is a man in whom is the spirit of the holy gods, who has something in him more than human, not only the spirit of a man, which in all is the candle of the Lord, but a divine spirit. According to the language of her country and religion, she could not give a higher encomium of any man: she speaks honourably of him as a man that had (1.) An admirable good head; light and understanding, and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods was found in him. Such an insight had he into things secret, and such a foresight of things to come, that it was evident he was divinely inspired; he had knowledge and understanding beyond all the other wise men for interpreting of dreams, explaining ænigmas, or hard sentences, untying knots, and dissolving doubts. Solomon had a wonderful sagacity of this kind, but it should seem that in these things Daniel had more of an immediate divine direction, Behold, a greater than Solomon himself is here; yet what was the wisdom of them both, compared with the treasures of wisdom hid in Christ? (2.) He had an admirable good heart. An excellent spirit was found in him, which was a great ornament to his wisdom and knowledge, and qualified him to receive that gift; for God giveth to a man, that is good in his sight, wisdom, and knowledge, and joy. He was of an humble, holy, heavenly spirit, had a devout and gracious spirit, a spirit of zeal for the glory of

God, and the good of men. This was indeed an excellent spirit.

(2.) The account she gives of the respect that Nebuchadnezzar had for him; he was much in his books, and was preferred by him. The king thy father, (that is, thy grand-father, but even to many generations Nebuchadnezzar might well be called the father of that royal family, for he it was that raised it to such a pitch of grandeur) the king, I say, thy father made him master of the magicians. Perhaps Belshazzar had sometimes in his pride spoken slightly of Nebuchadnezzar and his politicks, and the methods of his government, and the ministers he employed, and thought himself wiser than he, and therefore his mother harps upon that. The king, I say, thy father, to whose good management all thou hast is owing. He pronounced him chief of, and gave him dominion over, all the wise men of Babylon; and named him Belshazzar, according to the name of his god, thinking thereby to put honour upon him; but Daniel, by constantly making use of his Jewish name himself, (which he resolved to stick to, in token of his faithful adherence to his religion) had worn out that name; only the queen-dowager remembered it, otherwise he was generally called Daniel. Note, It is a very good office to revive the remembrance of the good services of worthy men; who are themselves modest and willing they should be forgotten.

(3.) The motion she makes concerning him; let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation. By this it appears that Daniel was now forgotten at court; Belshazzar was a stranger to him, knew not that he had such a jewel in his kingdom; with the new king there came in a new ministry, and the old one was laid aside. Note, There are a great many valuable men, and such as might be made very useful, that lie long buried in obscurity; and some that have done eminent services, that live to be over-looked, and taken no notice of; but whatever men are, God is not unrighteous to forget the services done to his kingdom. Daniel being turned out of his place, lived privately, and sought not any opportunity to come into play again; yet he lived near the court, and within call, though Babylon was now besieged, that he might be ready if there were occasion, to do any good office, by what interest he had among the great ones for the children of his people. But providence so ordered it, that now, just at the fall of that monarchy, he should by the queen's means be brought to court again, that he might lie there ready for preferment in the ensuing government. Thus do the righteous shine forth out of obscurity, and before honour is humility.

2. The introducing of Daniel to the king, and his request to him to read and expound the writing. Daniel was brought in before the king, ver. 13. He was now near ninety years of age, so that his years and honours, and former preferments, might have intitled him to a free admission into the king's presence, yet he was willing to be conducted in as a stranger, by the master of the ceremonies. Now (1.) The king asks with an air of haughtiness, Art thou that Daniel who art of the children of the captivity? Being a Jew, and a captive, he was loth to be beholding to him, if he could have helped it. (2.) He tells him what an encomium he had heard of him, ver. 14. that the spirit of the gods was in him: and he had sent for him to try whether he deserved so high a character or no. (3.) He acknowledgeth that all his wife men of Babylon were baffled, they could not read his writing, nor shew the interpretation, ver. 15. But, (4.) He promiseth him the same rewards he had promised them if he would do it, ver. 16. It was strange the magicians, when now, and in Nebuchadnezzar's time, once and again, they were non-plussed, did not offer at something to save their credit; if they had with a good assurance said, This is the meaning of such a dream, such a writing, who could disprove them? But God so ordered it, that they had nothing at all to say, as when Christ was born the heathen oracles were struck dumb.

3. The interpretation which Daniel gave of these mystick characters, which was so far from easing the king of his fears, that we may suppose it increased them rather. Daniel was now in years, and Belshazzar was young, and therefore he seems to take a greater liberty of dealing plainly and roundly with him, than he had done upon the like occasions with Nebuchadnezzar. In reproving any man, especially great men, there is need of wisdom to consider all circumstances, for they are the re-proofs of instruction that are the way of life. In Daniel's discourse here,

1. He undertakes to read the writing which gave them this alarm, and to shew them the interpretation of it, ver. 15. He flights the offer he made him of rewards, is not pleased that it was mentioned, for he is none of those that divine for money; what gratuities Nebuchadnezzar gave him afterwards he thankfully accepted them, but he scorned to indent for them, or to read the writing to the king, for, and in consideration of such and such honours promised him. No, Let thy gifts be to thy self, for they will not be long thine, and give thy fee to another, to any of the wise men which thou hadst most mind should have earned it, I value it not; Daniel sees his kingdom now at its last gasp, and therefore looks with contempt upon his gifts and rewards. And thus should we despise all the gifts and rewards this world can

can give, did we see, as we may by faith, its final period hastening on: let it give its perishing gifts to another, there are better gifts which we have our eyes and hearts upon; but let us do our duty in the world, do it all the real service we can, *read God's writing* to it in a profession of religion, and by an agreeable conversation *make known the interpretation* of it, and then trust God for his gifts, his rewards, in comparison with which all the world can give is meer trash, and trifles.

2. He largely recounts to the king God's dealings with his father Nebuchadnezzar, which were intended for instruction and warning to him, *ver. 18, 19, 20, 21.* This is not intended for a flourish or an amusement, but is a necessary preliminary to the interpretation of the writing. Note, That we may understand aright what God is doing with us, it is of use to us to review what he has done with others.

(1.) He describes the great dignity and power to which the divine providence had advanced Nebuchadnezzar, *ver. 18, 19.* He had a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour, for ought we know, above what any heathen prince ever had before him; now he thought he got it by his own extraordinary conduct and courage, and ascribed his successes to a projecting active genius of his own. But Daniel tells him who now enjoyed what he had laboured for, that it was the *most high God*, the *God of gods*, and *Lord of kings*, as Nebuchadnezzar himself had called him that gave him that kingdom, that vast dominion, that majesty, wherewith he presided in the affairs of it, and that *glory and honour* which by his prosperous management he acquired. Note, Whatever degree of outward prosperity any arrive to, they must own it is of God's giving, not their own getting. Let it never be said, *My might, and the power of my hand hath gotten me this wealth*, this preferment, but let it always be remembered, That it is *God that gives men power to get wealth*, and gives success to their endeavours. Now the power which God gave to Nebuchadnezzar is here described to be very great in respect both of ability, and of authority. (1.) His ability was so strong, that it was irresistible; such was the majesty that God gave him, so numerous the forces he had at command, and such an admirable dexterity he had at commanding them, that which way soever his sword turned it prospered; he could captivate and subdue nations by threatening them, without striking a stroke, for *all people trembled and feared before him*, and would compound with him for their lives upon any terms. See what force is, and what the fear of it doth: It is that by which the brutal part of the world, even of the world of mankind, both governs and is governed. (2.) His authority was so absolute, that it was uncontrollable. The power which was allowed him, which descended upon him, or which at least he assumed, was without contradiction, was absolute and despotick, none shared with him either in the legislative or the executive part of it; but in dispensing punishments he condemned or acquitted at pleasure, *whom he would he slew, and whom he would he saved alive*, though both were equally innocent, or equally guilty; the *ius vitæ & necis*, was entirely in his hand. In dispensing rewards he granted or denied preferments at pleasure, *whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down*, meerly for a humour, and without giving a reason so much as to himself; but it is all *ex mere motu*, and *stat pro ratione voluntas*. Such was the constitution of the eastern monarchies, such the manner of their kings.

(2.) He sets before him the sins which Nebuchadnezzar had been guilty of, whereby he had provoked God against him. (1.) He carried it *insultingly* towards those that were under him, and grew *tyrannical* and *oppressive*. The description given of his power intimates his abuse of his power, and that he was directed in what he did by humour and passion, not by reason and equity; so that he often condemned the innocent and acquitted the guilty, both which are an *abomination to the Lord*. He deposed men of merit, and preferred unworthy men, to the great detriment of the publick, and for this he is accountable to the most high God, that gave him his power. Note, It is a very hard and rare thing for men to have an absolute arbitrary power, and not to make an ill use of it. Camden has a distich of Giraldus, wherein he speaks of it, as a rare instance, concerning our king Henry the second of England, that never any man had so much power, and did so little hurt with it.

*Glorior hoc uno, quod nunquam vidimus unum,
Nec potuisse magis, nec nocuisse minus.*

But that was not all. (2.) He carried it *insolently* towards the God above him, and grew *proud* and *haughty*, *ver. 20.* His heart was *lifted up*, and there his sin and ruin begun; his mind was *hardened in pride*, hardened against the commands of God, and his judgments, he was wilful and obstinate, and neither God's word nor rod made any lasting impression upon him. Note, Pride is a sin that hardens the heart in all other sin, and renders the means of repentance and reformation ineffectual.

(3.) He reminds him of the judgments of God that were brought upon him for his pride and obstinacy. How he was deprived of his reason, and so *deposed from his kingly throne*, *ver. 20.* *Driven from among men, to dwell with the wild asses*, *ver. 21.* He that would govern his subjects by rules of reason, had not reason sufficient for

the government of himself. Note, Justly doth God deprive men of their reason, when they become unreasonable, and will not use it, and of their power when they become oppressive, and use it ill. He continued like a brute till *he knew* and embraced that first principle of religion, *That the most high God rules*. And it is rather by religion than reason, that man is distinguished from, and dignified above, the beasts; and it is more his honour to be a subject to the supream Creator, than to be lord of the inferior creatures. Note, Kings must know, or shall be made to know, that the most high God rules in their kingdoms, that is an *imperium in imperio* not to be excepted against; and that he appoints over them whomsoever he will. As he makes heirs, so he makes princes.

3. In God's name he exhibits articles of impeachment against Belshazzar; before he reads him his doom, from the hand-writing on the wall, he shews him his crime, that God may be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. Now that which he lays to his charge is,

(1.) That he had not taken warning by the judgments of God upon his father, *ver. 22.* *Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this.* Note, It is a great offence to God if our hearts be not humbled before him, to comply both with his precepts and with his providences, humbled by repentance, obedience, and patience; nay, he expects from the greatest of men that their hearts should be humbled before him, by an acknowledgment, that as great as they are, to him they are accountable. And it is a great aggravation of the unhumbleness of our hearts, when we know enough to humble them, but do not consider and improve it; particularly when we know how others have been broken that would not bend, how others have fallen that would not stoop, and yet we continue stiff and inflexible. It makes the sin of children the more heinous, if they tread in the steps of their parents wickedness, though they have seen how dear it has cost them, and how pernicious the consequences of it have been. Do we know this, do we know all this, and yet are we not humbled?

(2.) That he had affronted God more impudently than Nebuchadnezzar himself had done; witness the revels of this very night, in the midst of which he was seized with this horror, *ver. 23.* *Thou hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven*, hast swelled with rage against him, and taken up arms against his crown and dignity, in this particular instance, that thou hast profaned the vessels of his house, and made the utensils of his sanctuary instruments of thine iniquity, and in an actual designed contempt of him hast praised the gods of silver and gold, which see not, nor hear, nor know any thing, as if they were to be preferred before the God that sees and hears, and knows every thing. Sinners that are resolved to go on in sin, are well enough pleased with gods that neither see, nor hear, nor know, for then they may sin securely, but they will find to their confusion, that though those are the gods they chuse, those are not the gods they must be judged by, but one to whom all things are naked and open.

(3.) That he had not answered the end of his creation and maintenance; *the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified.* This is a general charge which stands good against us all, look how we shall answer it. Observe, (1.) Our dependence upon God as our creator, preserver, benefactor, owner, and ruler; not only from his hand our breath was at first, but *in his hand our breath is still*, it is he that holds our souls in life, and if he take away our breath we die. Our times being in his hand, so is our breath, by which our times are measured. *In him we live, and move, and have our being*, we live by him, live upon him, and cannot live without him. The way of man is not in himself, not at his own command, at his own dispose, but *his are all our ways*, for our hearts are in his hand, and so are the hearts of all men, even of kings, who seem to act most as free agents. (2.) Our duty to God in consideration of this dependence; we ought to glorify him, to devote ourselves to his honour, and employ ourselves in his service; to make it our care to please him, and our business to praise him. (3.) Our default in this duty, notwithstanding that dependence, we have not done it; for we have all sinned, and have come short of the glory of God. This is the indictment against Belshazzar, there needs no proof, it is made good by the notorious evidence of the fact, and his own conscience cannot but plead guilty to it. And therefore,

(4.) He now proceeds to read the sentence as he found it written upon the wall. Then (saith Daniel) when thou wast come to such a height of impiety as thus to trample upon the most sacred things, then when thou wast in the midst of thy sacrilegious idolatrous feast, then was the part of the hand, the writing fingers, sent from him, from that God whom thou didst so daringly affront, and who had born so long with thee, but would bear no longer; he sent them, and this writing thou now seest was written, *ver. 24.* It is he that now writes bitter things against thee, and makes thee to possess thine iniquities, Job xiii. 26. Note, As the sin of sinners is written in the book of God's omniscience, so the doom of sinners is written in the book of God's law; and the day is coming when those books shall be opened, and they shall be judged by them.

Now the writing was, *Mene Mene, Tekel Upharsin*, ver. 25. It is well we have an authentick exposition of them annexed, else we could make little of them, so concise are they; the signification of them is, *he hath numbred, he hath weighed, and they divide*. The Chaldean wise men, because they knew not that there is but one God only, could not understand who this *He* should be, and for that reason (some think) the writing puzzled them.

1. *Mene*, that is repeated for the thing is certain, *Mene mene*; that signifies, both in Hebrew and Chaldee, *He hath numbred and finished*; which Daniel explains thus, ver. 26. *God hath numbred thy kingdom*, i. e. the years and days of the continuance of it, these were numbred in the counsel of God, and now they are finished; the term is expired, for and during which thou wast to hold it, and now it must be surrendered. Here is an end of thy kingdom.

2. *Tekel*, that signifies in Chaldee, *thou art weighed*, and in Hebrew, *thou art too light*. So Dr Lightfoot. For this king and his actions are weighed in the just and unerring balances of divine equity; God doth as perfectly know his true character, as the goldsmith knows the weight of that which he has weighed in the nicest scales. God doth not give judgment against him till he has first pondered his actions, and considered the merits of his case. But thou art found wanting; unworthy to have such a trust lodged in thee, a vain light empty man; a man of no weight or consideration.

3. *Upharsin*, which should be rendred, and *Pharsin*, or *Peres*. *Parfin*, in Hebrew signifies the Persians; *Paresin*, in Chaldee, signifies dividing; Daniel puts both together, ver. 28. *Thy kingdom is divided*, is rent from thee, and given to the Medes and Persians, as a prey to be divided among them.

Now this may without any force be applied to the doom of sinners, *Mene, Tekel, Peres*, may easily be made to signify death, judgment, and hell. At death the sinners days are numbred and finished; after death the judgment; when he will be weighed in the balance and found wanting; and after judgment the sinner will be cut asunder, and given as a prey to the devil and his angels. Daniel doth not here give Belshazzar such advice and encouragement to repent as he had given Nebuchadnezzar, because he saw the decree was gone forth, and he would not be allowed any space to repent.

One would have thought Belshazzar should have been exasperated against Daniel, and, seeing his own case desperate, should have been in a rage against him. But he was so far convicted by his own conscience of the reasonableness of all he said, that he objected nothing against it; but, on the contrary, gave Daniel the reward he promised him, put on him the scarlet gown, and the gold chain, and proclaimed him the third ruler in the kingdom, ver. 29. because he would be as good as his word, and because it was not Daniel's fault, if the exposition of the hand writing was not such as he desired. Note, Many shew great respect to God's prophets, who yet have no regard to his word. Daniel did not value these titles and ensigns of honour, yet would not refuse them because they were tokens of his prince's good-will: but we have reason to think he received them with a smile, foreseeing how soon they would all wither with him that bestowed them. They were like Jonah's gourd, which came up in a night and perished in a night, and therefore it was folly for him to be exceeding glad of them.

30. ¶ In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. 31. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Here is, 1. The death of the king. Reason enough he had to tremble, for he was just falling into the hands of the king of terrors, ver. 30. In that night when his heart was merry with wine, the besiegers broke into the city, aimed at the palace, there they found the king, and gave him his death's wound; he could not find any place so secret as to conceal him, or so strong as to protect him. Heathen writers speak of Cyrus's taking Babylon by surprize, with the assistance of two deserters that shewed him the best way into the city. And it was foretold what a consternation it would be to the court, Jer. li. 11, 39. Note, Death comes as a snare upon those whose hearts are overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.

2. The transferring of the kingdom into other hands. From the head of gold we now descend to the breast and arms of silver; Darius the Mede took the kingdom in partnership with, and by the consent of Cyrus, who had conquered it, ver. 31. They were partners in war and conquest, and so they were in dominion, chap. vi. 28. Notice is taken of his age, that he was now sixty-two years old; for which reason Cyrus, who was his nephew, gave him the precedency. Some observe, that he being now sixty-two years old in the last year of the captivity, he was born in the eighth year of it, and that was the year when Jeconiah was carried captive, and all the nobles, &c. see 2 Kings xxiv. 13, 15. Just at that time when the most fatal stroke was given was a prince born, that in process of time should avenge Jerusalem upon Babylon, and heal the wound that was now given. Thus deep are the counsels of God concerning his people, thus kind are his designs towards them.

CHAP. VI.

Daniel doth not give a continued history of the reigns in which he lived, nor of the state-affairs of the kingdoms of Chaldea and Persia, though he was himself a great man in those affairs, for what are those to us? But he selects such particular passages of story, as serve for the confirming of our faith in God, and the encouraging of our obedience to him; for the things written aforetime were written for our learning. It is a very observable, improvable story that we have in this chapter, how Daniel, by faith stopped the mouths of lions, and so obtained a good report, Heb. xi. 33. The three children were cast into the fiery furnace for not omitting a known sin, Daniel was cast into the lions den for not omitting a known duty, and God's miraculous delivering both them and him is left upon record for the encouragement of his servants in all ages, to be resolute and constant both in their abhorrence of that which is evil, and in their adherence to that which is good, whatever it cost them. In this chapter we have, (1.) Daniel's preferment in the court of Darius, ver. 1—3. (2.) The envy and malice of his enemies against him, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The decree they obtained against prayer for thirty days, ver. 6—9. (4.) Daniel's continuance and constancy in prayer notwithstanding that decree, ver. 10. (5.) Information given against him for it, and the casting of him into the den of lions, ver. 11—17. (6.) His miraculous preservation in the lions den, and deliverance out of it, ver. 18—23. (7.) The casting of his accusers into the den, and their destruction there, ver. 24. (8.) The decree which Darius made upon this occasion in honour of the God of Daniel, and the prosperity of Daniel afterwards, ver. 25—28. And this God is our God for ever and ever.

1. ¶ It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; 2. And over these, three presidents (of whom Daniel was first) that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. 3. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. 4. ¶ Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault: forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. 5. Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

We are here told concerning Daniel,

1. What a great man he was. When Darius, upon his accession to the crown of Babylon by conquest, new modelled the government, he made Daniel prime-minister of state, set him at the helm, and made him first commissioner both of the treasury, and of the great seal; Darius's dominion was very large, all he got by his conquests and acquests was, that he had so many more countries to take care of; no more can be expected from himself than what one man can do, and therefore others must be employed under him. He set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, ver. 1. and appointed them their districts in which they were to administer justice, preserve the publick peace, and levy the king's revenue. Note, Inferior magistrates are ministers of God to us for good as well as the sovereign; and therefore we must submit ourselves both to the king as supreme, and to the governors that are constituted and commissioned by him, 1 Pet. ii. 13, 14. Over these princes there was a triumvirate, or three presidents, who were to take and state the publick accounts, to receive appeals from the princes, or complaints against them in case of male-administration, that the king should have no damage, ver. 2. that he should not sustain loss in his revenue, and that the power he delegated to the princes might not be abused to the oppression of the subject, for by that the king (whether he thinks so or no) receives real damage; both as it alienates the affections of his people from him, and provokes the displeasure of his God against him. Of these three Daniel was the chief, because he was found to go beyond them all, in all manner of princely qualifications. He was preferred above the presidents and princes, ver. 3. and so wonderfully well pleased the king was with his management, that he thought to set him over the whole realm, and let him place and displace at his pleasure.

Now, (1.) We must take notice of it to the praise of Darius, that he would prefer a man thus, purely for his personal merit, and

and his fitness for business; and those sovereigns that would be well served must go by that rule, Daniel had been a great man in the kingdom that was conquered, and for that reason one would think should have been looked upon as an enemy, and as such imprisoned, or banished: he was a native of a foreign kingdom, and a ruined one, and upon that account might have been despised as a stranger and captive: but Darius, it seems, was very quick-sighted in judging of mens capacities, and was soon aware that this Daniel had something extraordinary in him, and therefore tho', no doubt, he had creatures of his own, not a few, that expected preferment in this new conquered kingdom, and were gaping for it, and those that had been long his confidants would depend upon it that they should be now his presidents, yet so well did he consult the publick welfare, that finding Daniel to excel them all in prudence and virtue, and probably having heard of his being divinely inspired, he made him his right hand. (2.) We must take notice of it to the glory of God, that tho' Daniel was now very old, it is above seventy years since he was brought a captive to Babylon, yet he was as able as ever for business both in body and mind. And that he who had continued faithful to his religion, through all the temptations of the foregoing reigns, in a new government was as much respected as ever. He kept in by being an oak, not by being a willow; by a constancy in virtue, not by a pliability to vice. Such honesty is the best policy, for it secures a reputation; and those who thus honour God, he will honour them.

2. What a good man he was. *An excellent spirit was in him,* ver. 3. And he was faithful to every trust, dealt fairly between the sovereign and the subject; and took care that neither should be wronged, so that there was *no error, or fault to be found in him,* ver. 4. He was not only not chargeable with any treachery, or dishonesty, but not with any mistake or indiscretion. He never made any blunder, nor had any occasion to plead inadvertency or forgetfulness for his excuse. This is recorded for an example to all that are in places of publick trust, to approve themselves both careful and conscientious, that they may be free not only from fault but error; not only from crime, but from mistake.

3. What ill will was born him, both for his greatness and for his goodness. The presidents and princes envied him, because he was advanced above them, and probably hated him, because he had a watchful eye upon them, and took care they should not wrong the government to enrich themselves. See here (1.) The cause of envy, and that is *every thing that is good*; Solomon complains of it as a vexation, that *for every right work a man is envied of his neighbour*, Eccl. iv. 4. that the better a man is, the worse he is thought of by his rivals; Daniel is envied because he has a *more excellent spirit* than his neighbours. (2.) The effect of envy; and that is *every thing that is bad*; those that envied Daniel sought no less than his ruin, his disgrace would not serve them, it was his death they desired. *Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous, but who can stand before envy?* Prov. xxvii 4. Daniel's enemies set spies upon him to observe him in the management of his place, they sought to find occasion against him, something on which to ground an accusation concerning the kingdom, some instance of neglect or partiality, some hasty word spoken, some person born hard upon, or some necessary business overlooked. And if they could but have found the mote, the mole-hill of a mistake, it should have been soon improved to the beam, to the mountain of an unpardonable misdemeanour. But they could find no occasion against him; they owned they could not. Daniel always acted honestly, and now the more warily, and stood the more upon his guard, *because of his observers*, Psal. xxvii. 11. Note, We have all need to walk circumspectly, because we have many eyes upon us, and some that watch for our halting. Those especially have need to carry their cup even, that have it full. They concluded at length they should not find any occasion against him, except concerning the law of his God, ver. 5. It seems then Daniel kept up the profession of his religion, and held it fast without wavering, or shrinking; and yet that was no bar to his preferment: there was no law required him to be of the king's religion, or incapacitated him to bear office in the state unless he were. It was all one to the king what God he prayed to, so long as he did the business of his place faithfully and well; he was at the king's service *usque ad aras*, but there he left him. In this matter therefore his enemies hoped to ensnare him. *Quærendum est crimen læsæ religionis ubi majestatis deficit.* Grot. Note, It is an excellent thing, and much for the glory of God, when those who profess religion carry themselves so inoffensively in their whole conversation, that their most watchful, spiteful enemies may find no occasion of blaming them, save only in the matters of their God, in which they walk according to their consciences. It is observable, that when Daniel's enemies could find no occasion against him concerning the kingdom, they had so much sense of justice left, that they did not suborn witnesses against him to accuse him of crimes he was innocent of, and to bear treason upon him, wherein they shame many that were called Jews, and are called Christians.

6. Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. 7. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. 8. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing; that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 9. Wherefore king Darius signed the writing, and the decree. 10. ¶ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Daniel's adversaries could have no advantage against him by any law now in being, they therefore contrive a new law, by which they hope to ensnare him, and in such a matter as they knew they should be sure of him; and such was his fidelity to his God, that they gained their point. Here is,

1. Darius's impious law. I call it Darius's, because he gave the royal assent to it, and otherwise it had not been of force; but it was not properly his, he contrived it not, and was perfectly wheedled to consent to it. The presidents and princes framed the edict, brought in the bill, and by their management it was agreed to by the convention of the states, who, perhaps, were met at this time upon some publick occasion; it is pretended that this bill, which they would have to pass into a law, was the result of mature deliberation; that *all the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, princes, counsellors, and captains, had consulted together* about it, and that they not only agreed to it, but *advised it, for divers good causes and considerations*, that they had done what they could to *establish it for a firm decree*; nay, they intimate to the king, that it was carried *nemine contradicente*: *All the presidents* are of this mind, and yet we are sure that Daniel, the chief of the three presidents, did not agree to it; and have reason to think that many more of the princes excepted against it, as absurd and unreasonable. Note, It is no new thing for that to be represented, and with great assurance too, as the sense of the nation which is far from being so; and that which few approve of, is sometimes confidently said to be that which *all agree to*. But, O the infelicity of kings, who being under a necessity of seeing and hearing with other peoples eyes and ears, are many times wretchedly imposed upon. These designing men, under colour of doing honour to the king, but really intending the ruin of his favourite, press him to pass this into a law, and make it a royal statute, that *whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, should be put to death after the most barbarous manner, should be cast into the den of lions*, ver. 7. This is the bill they have been hatching, and they lay it before the king to be signed, and passed into a law. Now (1.) There is nothing in it that has the least appearance of good, but that it magnifies the king, and makes him seem both very great, and very kind to his subjects, which they suggest will be of good service to him now he is newly come to his throne; and will confirm his interests. All men must be made to believe that the king is so rich, and withal so ready to all petitioners, that none in any want or distress need to apply themselves either to God or man for relief, but to him only. And for thirty days together he will be ready to give audience to all that have any petition to present to him. It is indeed much for the honour of kings to be benefactors to their subjects, and to have their ears open to their complaints and requests: but if they pretend to be their sole benefactors, and undertake to be to them instead of God, and challenge that respect from them which is due to God only, it is their disgrace and not their honour. But, (2.) There is a great deal in it that is *apparently evil*; it is bad enough to forbid asking a petition of any man; must not a beggar ask an alms? or one neighbour beg a kindness of another? if the child want bread, must he not ask it of his parents, or be cast into the den of lions if he do? nay, they that have business with the king, may they not petition those about him to introduce them? but it was much worse, and an impudent affront to all religion, to forbid asking a petition of any god. It is by prayer that we give glory to God, fetch in mercy from God, and so keep up our communion with God; and to interdict prayer for thirty days, is for so long to rob God of all the tribute he has from man, and to rob man of all the comfort he has in God. When the light of nature teacheth us that the providence of God has the ordering and disposing of all our affairs, doth not the law of nature oblige us by prayer to acknowledge God, and seek to him? doth not every man's heart direct him when he is in want or distress, to call upon God; and must this be made high-treason? We could not live a day without God, and can men live thirty days without prayer?

Will the king himself be tied up for so long from praying to God, or if it be allowed him, will he undertake to do it for all his subjects? did ever any nation thus slight their gods? But see what absurdities malice will drive men to. Rather than not bring Daniel into trouble for praying to his God, they will deny themselves and all their friends the satisfaction of praying to theirs. Had they proposed only to prohibit the Jews from praying to their God, Daniel would have been as effectually ensnared; but they knew the king would not pass such a law, and therefore made it thus general. And the king, puffed up with a fancy that this would set him up as a *little god*, was fond of the *feather in his cap*, (for so it was, and not a *flower in his crown*,) and signed the writing and the decree, ver. 9. which being once done according to the constitution of the united kingdom of the Medes and Persians, it was not upon any pretence whatever to be altered, or dispensed with, or the breach of it pardoned.

2. Daniel's pious *disobedience* to this law, ver. 10. He did not retire into the country, or abscond for some time, though he knew the law was levelled against him; but because he knew it was so, therefore he *stood his ground*, knowing that he had now a fair opportunity of honouring God before men, and shewing that he preferred his favour, and his duty to him, before life itself. *When Daniel knew that the writing was signed*, he might have gone to the king and expostulated with him about it; nay, he might have remonstrated against it, as grounded upon a misinformation that *all the presidents* had consented to it, whereas he that was chief of them had never been consulted about it; but *he went to his house*, and applied himself to his duty, cheerfully trusting God with the event. Now observe,

1. Daniel's constant practice, which we had not been told but upon this occasion; but we have reason to think it was the general practice of the pious Jews. (1.) He *prayed in his house*, sometimes himself alone, and sometimes with his family about him, and made a solemn business of it. Cornelius was a man that *prayed in his house*, Acts x. 30. Note, Every house not only *may be*, but *ought to be*, a house of prayer; where we have a tent, God must have an altar, and on it we must offer spiritual sacrifices. (2.) In every prayer he *gave thanks*; when we pray to God for the mercies we want, we must praise him for those we have received. Thanksgiving must be a part of every prayer. (3.) In his prayer and thanksgiving he had an eye to God as *his God*, his covenant, and set himself as in his presence. He did this *before his God*, and with a regard to him. (4.) When he *prayed and gave thanks*, he *kneeled upon his knees*, which is the most proper gesture in prayer, and most expressive of humility and reverence, and submission to God. Kneeling is a begging posture, and we come to God as beggars, beggars for our lives, whom it concerns to be importunate. (5.) He *opened the windows of his chamber*, that the sight of the visible heavens might affect his heart with an awe of that God who dwells above the heavens: but that was not all, he *opened them towards Jerusalem*, the holy city, tho' now in ruins, to signify the affection he had for its very *stones and dust*, Psal. cii. 14. and the remembrance he had of its concerns daily in his prayers. Thus, tho' he himself lived great in Babylon, yet he testified his concurrence with the meanest of his brethren, the captives in remembering Jerusalem, and preferring it before his *chief joy*. Psal. cxxxvii. 5, 6. Jerusalem was the place which God had chosen to put his name there; and when the temple was dedicated, Solomon's prayer to God was, that if his people should *in the land of their enemies* pray unto him with their eye towards the land which he gave them, and the city he had chosen, and the house that was built to his name, that then he would *hear and maintain their cause*, 1 Kings viii. 48, 49. to which prayer Daniel had reference in this circumstance of his devotions. (6.) He did this *three times a day*, three times every day, according to the example of David, Psal. lv. 17. *Morning, evening, and at noon I will pray*. It is good to have our *hours of prayer*, not to bind, but to mind conscience; and if we think our bodies require refreshment by food thrice a day, can we think seldomer will serve our souls? This is sure as little as may be to answer the command of *praying always*. (7.) He did this so openly and avowedly, that all that knew him, knew it to be his practice; and he thus shewed it, not because he was *proud of it*: in the place where he was, there was no room for that temptation, for it was not reputation, but reproach that attended it, but because he was *not ashamed of it*. Tho' Daniel was a *great man*, he did not think it below him to be thrice a day upon his knees before his Maker, and to be his own chaplain; tho' he was an *old man*, he did not think himself *past it*, nor tho' it had been his practice from his youth up, was he weary of this well doing. Tho' he was a man of business, vast business, for the service of the publick, he did not think that would excuse him from the daily exercises of devotion. How inexcusable then are they who have but little to do in the world, and yet will not do thus much for God and their souls! Daniel was a man famous for prayer, and for success in it, Ezek. xiv. 14. and he came to be so by thus making a conscience of prayer, and making a business of it daily; and in thus doing, God blessed him wonderfully.

2. Daniel's constant adherence to this practice, even when it was made by the law a capital crime. *When he knew that the*

writing was signed, he continued to do *as he did aforetime*, and altered not one circumstance of the performance. Many a man, yea, and many a good man, would have thought it prudence to omit it for these thirty days, when he could not do it without hazard of his life; he might have prayed *so much the oftner* when those days were expired; and the danger was over; or he might have performed the duty at *another time*; and in *another place*, so secretly, that it should not be possible for his enemies to discover it, and so he might both satisfy his conscience; and keep up his communion with God, and yet avoid the law; and continue in his usefulness: but if he had done so, it would have been thought, both by his friends and by his enemies; that he had *thrown up the duty* for this time through cowardise and base fear, which would have tended very much to the dishonour of God, and the discouragement of his friends. Others that moved in a lower sphere might well enough act with caution; but Daniel that has so many eyes upon him, must act with courage; and the rather because he knows the law when it was made; was particularly levelled against him. Note, We must not omit duty for fear of suffering, no, nor so much as *seem to come short* of it. In trying times, great stress is laid upon our *confessing Christ before men*, Mat. x. 32. and we must take heed, lest, under pretence of discretion, we be found guilty of cowardise in the cause of God. If we do not think this example of Daniel obligeth us to do likewise, yet I am sure it forbids us to censure those that do, for God owned him in it. By his constancy to his duty, now it appears he had never been used to admit any excuse for the omission of it, for if ever any excuse would have served to put it by, this would have served now, (1.) That it was *forbidden by the king* his master, and in honour of the king too; but it is an undoubted maxim in answer to that, we are to obey God rather than men. (2.) That it would be the loss of his life; but it is an undoubted maxim in answer to that, that they who throw away their souls, (as those certainly do that live without prayer) to save their lives, make but an ill bargain for themselves, and tho' herein they make themselves, like the king of Tyre, *wiser than Daniel*, at their end they will be fools.

11. Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying, and making supplication before his God. 12. Then they came near, and spake before the king, concerning the king's decree, *Hast thou not signed a decree*, that every man that shall ask a *petition* of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. 13. Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regarded not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. 14. Then the king when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun, to deliver him. 15. Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth, may be changed. 16. Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions: now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou serveest continually, he will deliver thee. 17. And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Here is, 1. Proof made of Daniel's praying to his God, notwithstanding the late edict to the contrary, ver. 11. *These men assembled*, they came *tumultuously together*, so the word is, the same that was used, ver. 6. borrowed from Psal. ii. 1. *Why do the heathen rage?* They came together to visit Daniel, perhaps under pretence of business, at that time which they knew to be his usual hour of devotion, and if they had not found him so engaged, they would have upbraided him with his faint-heartedness and distrust of his God; but (which they rather wished to do) they *found him on his knees praying*, and making supplication before his God. For his love they are his *adversaries*, but like his father David, he *gives himself unto prayer*, Psal. cix. 4.

2. Complaint made of it to the king. When they had found occasion against Daniel concerning the law of his God, they lost no time, but applied themselves to the king, ver. 12. and having appealed to him, whether there was not such a law made, and gained from him a recognition of it; and that it was so ratified, as that it might not be altered, they proceeded to accuse Daniel, ver. 13. They describe him so in the information they give as

to exasperate the king, and incense him the more against him, he is of the children of the captivity of Judah, he is of Judah, that despicable people, and now a captive in a despicable state, that can call nothing his own but what he has by the king's favour, and yet *he regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed.* Note, It is no new thing for that which is done *faithfully*, in conscience towards God, to be misrepresented as done *obstinately*, and in contempt of the civil powers, that is, for the *best saints* to be reproached as the *worst men*. Daniel regarded God, and therefore prayed, and we have reason to think prayed for the king and his government, yet this is construed as *not regarding the king*. That *excellent spirit* which Daniel was endued with, and that established reputation which he had gained, could not protect him from these poisonous darts. They do not say, he makes his petition to his God, lest Darius should take notice of that to his praise, but only *he makes his petition*, which is the thing the law forbids.

3. The great concern the king was in hereupon. He now perceived, that whatever they pretended it was not to honour him, but in spite to Daniel, that they had proposed that law, and now is *fore displeased with himself* for gratifying them in it, *ver. 14.* Note, When men indulge a proud vain-glorious humour, and please themselves with that which feeds it, they know not what vexations they are preparing for themselves; their flatterers may prove their tormenters, and were but *spreading a net for their feet*. Now the king sets his heart to deliver Daniel, both by argument and by authority he labours till the going down of the sun to deliver him, i. e. to persuade his accusers not to insist upon his prosecution. Note, We often do that through inconsideration, which afterwards we see cause a thousand times to wish undone again, which is a good reason why we should *ponder the path of our feet*, for then *all our ways will be established*.

4. The violence with which the prosecutors demanded judgment, *ver. 15.* We are not told what Daniel said; the king himself is his advocate, he needs not plead his own cause, but silently commits himself and it to him that judges righteously; but the prosecutors insist upon it, that the law must have its course; it is a fundamental maxim in the constitution of the government of the Medes and Persians, which is now become the universal monarchy, That *no decree or statute which the king establisheth may be changed*. The same we find *Esth. i. 19.—viii. 8.* The Chaldeans magnified the will of their king, by giving him a power to make and unmake laws at his pleasure, to slay and keep alive whom he would: The Persians magnified the wisdom of their king by supposing that whatever law he solemnly ratified, it was so well made, that there could be no occasion to alter it, or dispense with it, as if any human foresight could in framing a law, guard against all inconveniencies. But if this maxim be duly applied to Daniel's case (as I am apt to think it is not, but perverted) while it honours the king's legislative power, it hampers his executive power, and incapacitates him to shew that *mercy* which upholds the throne, and to pass acts of indemnity which are the glories of a reign. Those who allow not the sovereign's power to dispense with a *disabling statute*, yet never question his power to pardon an offence against a *penal statute*. But Darius is denied this power. See what need we have to pray for princes, that God would give them wisdom, for they are often embarrassed with great difficulties, even the wisest and best are.

5. The executing of the law upon Daniel. The king himself with the utmost reluctance, and against his conscience, signs the warrant for his execution, and Daniel, that venerable grave man, that carried such a mixture of majesty and sweetness in his countenance, that had so often looked great upon the bench, and at the council board, and greater upon his knees, that had power with God and man, and had prevailed, purely for worshipping his God, is brought as if he had been one of the vilest of malefactors, and thrown into the den of lions to be devoured by them, *ver. 16.* One cannot think of it without the utmost compassion of the gracious sufferer, and the utmost indignation at the malicious prosecutors. To make sure work, the stone laid upon the mouth of the den is sealed, and the king (an over-easy man) is persuaded to do it with his own signet, *ver. 17.* that unhappy signet with which he had confirmed the law that Daniel falls by. But his lords cannot trust him, unless they add their signets too. Thus when Christ was buried, his adversaries sealed the stone that was rolled to the door of his sepulchre.

6. The encouragement which Darius gave to Daniel to trust in God, *Thy God whom thou serveest continually he will deliver thee*, *ver. 16.* Here (1.) He justifies Daniel from guilt, owning all his crime to be serving his God continually, and continuing to do so, even when it was made a crime. (2.) He leaves it to God to free him from punishment, since he could not prevail to do it. *He will deliver thee.* He is sure his God can deliver him, for he believes him to be an almighty God, and he has reason to think he will do it, having heard of his delivering Daniel's companions in a like case from the fiery furnace, and concluding him to be always faithful to those who approve themselves faith-

ful to him. Note, Those who serve God continually he will continually preserve, and will bear them out in his service.

18. ¶ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him, and his sleep went from him. 19. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. 20. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel, and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living GOD, is thy GOD, whom thou serveest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? 21. Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever. 22. My GOD hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions mouths that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. 23. Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den: so Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his GOD. 24. ¶ And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Here is, 1. The melancholy night which the king had upon Daniel's account, *ver. 18.* He had said indeed, that God would deliver him out of the danger, but at the same time he could not forgive himself for throwing him into the danger, and justly might God deprive him of a friend whom he had himself used so barbarously. He went to his palace vexed at himself for what he had done, and calling himself *unwise* and *unjust* for not adhering to the law of God and nature, with a *non obstante* to the law of the Medes and Persians: He eat no supper, but passed the night fasting; his heart was already full of grief and fear. He forbid the musick; nothing more displeasing than songs sung to a heavy heart. He went to bed but got no sleep; was full of tossings to and fro till the dawning of the day. Note, The best way to have a good night is to keep a good conscience, then we may lay us down in peace.

2. The solicitous enquiry he made concerning Daniel the next morning, *ver. 19, 20.* He was up early, *very early*, for how could he lie in bed when he could not sleep for dreaming of Daniel, nor lie awake quietly for thinking of him. And he was no sooner up but he went in haste to the den of lions, for he could not satisfy himself to send a servant, that would not sufficiently testify his affection to Daniel, nor had he patience to stay so long as till a servant would return. When he comes to the den, not without some hopes, that God had graciously undone what he had wickedly done, he cries with a lamentable voice, as one full of concern and trouble, O Daniel, Art thou alive? He longs to know, yet trembles to ask the question, fearing to be answered with the roaring of the lions after more prey; O Daniel, servant of the living God, has thy God whom thou serveest made it to appear that he is able to deliver thee from the lions? If he rightly understood himself when he called him the living God, he could not doubt of his ability, to keep Daniel alive, for he that has life in himself quickens whom he will; but has he thought fit in this case to exert his power? What he doubted of, we are sure of, that the servants of the living God have a master who is well able to protect them, and bear them out in his service.

3. The joyful news he meets with, that Daniel is alive, is safe and well, and unhurt in the lions den, *ver. 21, 22.* Daniel knew the king's voice, tho' it was now a lamentable voice, and spake to him with all the deference and respect that was due to him, O king, live for ever; he doth not reproach him for his unkindness to him, and his easiness in yielding to the malice of his prosecutors, but to shew that he has heartily forgiven him, he meets him with his good wishes. Note, We should not upbraid those with the diskindnesses they have done us, who we know did them with reluctance, and are very ready to upbraid themselves with them. The account Daniel gives the king is very pleasant, it is triumphant.

(1.) God has preserved his life; by a miracle. Darius had called him Daniel's God, *thy God whom thou serveest*, to which Daniel doth as it were echo back, yea, he is my God, whom I own, and who owns me, for he hath sent his angel, the same bright and glorious being that was seen in the form of the son of God with the three children in the fiery furnace, had visited Daniel, and it is likely in a visible appearance had enlightened the dark den, and kept Daniel company all night, and had shut the lions mouths, that they had not in the least hurt him. The angel's presence

presence made even the lions den his strong-hold, his palace, his paradise; he never had had a better night in his life. See the power of God over the fiercest creatures, and believe his power to restrain the roaring lion that goes about continually seeking to devour, from hurting those that are his. See the care God takes of his faithful worshippers, especially when he calls them out to suffer for him. If he keep their souls from sin, comfort their souls with his peace, and receive their souls to himself, he doth in effect stop the lions mouths that they cannot hurt them. See how ready the angels are to minister for the good of God's people, for they own themselves their fellow servants.

(2.) God has therein pleaded his cause. He was represented to the king as disaffected to him and his government; we do not find he said any thing in his own vindication, but left it to God to clear up his integrity as the light, and he did it effectually by working a miracle for his preservation. Daniel in what he had done had not offended either God or the king; before him whom I prayed to, *innocency was found in me*: He pretends not to a meritorious excellency; but the testimony of his conscience concerning his sincerity is his comfort; as also that before thee, O king, I have done no hurt, nor designed thee any affront.

4. The discharge of Daniel from his confinement. His prosecutors cannot but own that the law is satisfied tho' they are not, or if it be altered, it is by a power superior to that of the Medes and Persians, and therefore no cause can be shewn why Daniel should not be fetched out of the den; ver. 23. The king was exceeding glad to find him alive, and gave orders immediately that they should take him out of the den, as Jeremiah out of the dungeon; and when they searched no manner of hurt was found upon him, he was no where crushed or scarred, but was kept perfectly well, because he believed in his God. Note, Those who boldly and cheerfully trust in God to protect them in the way of their duty, shall never be made ashamed of their confidence in him, but shall always find him a present help.

5. The committing of his prosecutors to the same prison, or place of execution rather, ver. 24. Darius is animated by this miracle wrought for Daniel, and now begins to take courage and act like himself; those that would not suffer him to shew mercy to Daniel, now God has done it for him, shall be made to feel his resentments, and he will do justice for God who had shewed mercy for him. Daniel's accusers, now his innocency is cleared, and heaven itself is become his compurgator, have the same punishment inflicted upon them which they designed against him, according to the law of retaliation, made against false accusers, Deut. xix. 18, 19. Such they were to be reckoned now Daniel was proved innocent, for tho' the fact was true, yet it was not a fault. They were cast into the den of lions, which perhaps was a punishment newly invented by themselves, however, it was what they maliciously designed for Daniel. *Nec lex est justior ulla quam necis Artifices arte perire sua.* Psal. vii. 15, 16.—ix. 15, 16. And now Solomon's observation is verified, Prov. xi. 8. The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in his stead. In this execution we may observe, (1.) The king's severity, in ordering their wives and children to be thrown to the lions with them. How righteous are God's statutes above those of the nations, for God commanded that the children should not die for the fathers crimes. Deut. xxiv. 16. Yet it was done in extraordinary cases, as that of Achon, and Saul, and Haman. (2.) The lions fierceness. They had the mastery of them immediately, and tore them to pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. This verified and magnified the miracle of their sparing Daniel; for hereby it appeared that it was not because they had not appetite, but because they had not leave. Mastiffs that are kept muzzled are the more fierce when the muzzle is taken off; so were these lions. And the Lord is known by those judgments which he executeth.

25. ¶ Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. 26. I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the G O D of Daniel: for he is the living G O D, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end. 27. He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. 28. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Darius here studies to make some amends for the dishonour he had done both to God and Daniel, in casting Daniel into the lions den, by doing honour to both.

1. He gives honour to God by a decree published to all nations, by which they are required to fear before him. And this is a decree which is indeed fit to be made unalterable, according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, for it is the everlasting

gospel, preached to them that dwell on the earth, Rev. xiv. 7. Fear God, and give glory to him. Observe, (1.) To whom he sends this decree; to all people, nations and languages, that dwell in all the earth, ver. 25. These are big words, and it is true that all the inhabitants of the earth are obliged to that which is here decreed; but here they mean no more but every dominion of his kingdom, which tho' it contained many nations, yet not all nations; but so it is, those that have much are ready to think they have all. (2.) What the matter of the decree is; That men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. This goes further than Nebuchadnezzar's decree upon the like occasion, for that only restrained people from speaking amiss of this God, but this requires them to fear before him, to keep up and express awful, reverent thoughts of him. And well might this decree be prefaced as it is with peace be multiplied unto you, for the only foundation of true and abundant peace is laid in the fear of God; for that is true wisdom. If we live in the fear of God, and walk according to that rule, peace shall be upon us. Peace shall be multiplied to us. But tho' this decree goes far, it doth not go far enough; had he done right, and come up to his present convictions, he should have commanded all men not only to tremble and fear before this God, but to love him and trust in him, to forsake the service of their idols, and to worship him only, and call upon him as Daniel did. But idolatry had been so long and so deeply rooted, that it was not to be extirpated by the edicts of princes, nor by any power less than that which went along with the glorious gospel of Christ. (3.) What are the causes and considerations moving him to make this decree. They are sufficient to have justified a decree for the total suppression of idolatry, much more will they serve to support this. There is good reason why all men should fear before this God; for, (1.) His being is transcendent. He is the living God; lives as a God, whereas the gods we worship are dead things, have not so much as an animal life. (2.) His government is incontestable; he has a kingdom, and a dominion; he not only lives but reigns, as an absolute sovereign. (3.) Both his being and his government are unchangeable. He is himself stedfast for ever, and with him is no shadow of turning. And his kingdom too is that which shall not be destroyed by any external force, nor has his dominion any thing in itself that threatens a decay, or tends toward it, and therefore it shall be even to the end. (4.) He has an ability sufficient to support such an authority, ver. 27. He delivereth his faithful servants from trouble, and rescueth them out of trouble; he worketh signs and wonders, quite above the utmost power of nature to effect, both in heaven and on earth, by which it appears that he is sovereign Lord of both. (5.) He has given a fresh proof of all this in delivering his servant Daniel from the power of the lions. This miracle, and that of the delivering of the three children, were wrought in the eye of the world, were seen, published and attested by two of the greatest monarchs that ever were, and were illustrious confirmations of the first principles of religion, abstracted from the narrow scheme of Judaism, effectual confutations of all the errors of Heathenism, and very proper preparations for pure Catholick Christianity.

2. He puts honour upon Daniel, ver. 28. So this Daniel prospered. See how God brought to him good out of evil. This bold stroke which his enemies made at his life was a happy occasion of taking them off, and their children too, who otherwise would still have stood in the way of his preferment, and have been upon all occasions vexatious to him; and now he prospered more than ever, was more in favour with his prince, and reputation with the people; which gave him a great opportunity of doing good to his brethren. Thus out of the eaters (and that was a lion too) came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetens.

C H A P. VII.

The six former chapters of this book were historical, we now enter with fear and trembling upon the six latter which are prophetic, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which we dare not positively determine the sense of, and yet many things plain and profitable, which I trust God will enable us to make a good use of. In this chapter we have (1.) Daniel's vision of the four beasts, ver. 1, 8. (2.) His vision of God's throne of government and judgment, ver. 9, 14. (3.) The interpretation of these visions given him by an angel that stood by, ver. 15, 28. Whether those visions look as far forward as the end of time; or whether they were to have a speedy accomplishment, is hard to say, nor are the most judicious interpreters agreed concerning it.

1. I N the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream, and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told

told the sum of the matters. 2. Daniel spake, and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3. And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. 4. The first *was* like a lion, and had eagles wings: and I beheld till the wings thereof were pluckt, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a mans heart was given to it. 5. And behold, another beast, a second like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it *had* three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. 6. After this, I beheld, and lo, another like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl, the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. 7. After this, I saw, in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it, and it *was* diverse from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. 8. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns pluckt up by the roots: and behold, in this horn *were* eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

The date of this chapter placeth it before chap. v. which was in the last year of Belshazzar, and chap. vi. which was in the first of Darius, for Daniel had those visions in the first year of Belshazzar, when the captivity of the Jews in Babylon was drawing near a period. Belshazzar's name here is in the original spelled differently from what it used to be; before it was Bel-she-azar, *Bel is he that treasures up riches*. But this is Bel-eshe-azar, *Bel is on fire by the enemy*; Bel was the god of the Chaldeans, he had prospered, but is now to be consumed.

We have in these verses Daniel's vision of the four monarchies that were oppressive to the Jews. Observe,

1. The circumstances of this vision: Daniel had interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and now he is himself honoured with like divine discoveries, *ver. 1.* He *had visions of his head upon his bed*, when he was asleep; so God sometimes revealed himself and his mind to the children of men, when deep sleep fell upon them, *Job xxxiii. 15.* For when we are most retired from the world, and taken off from the things of sense, we are most fit for communion with God. But when he was awake, he *wrote the dream* for his own use, lest he should forget it as a dream, which passeth away; and he *told the sum of the matters*, to his brethren the Jews, for their use, and gave it them in writings, that it might be communicated to those at a distance, and preserved for their children after them, who should see these things accomplished. The Jews misunderstanding some of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, flattered themselves with hopes, that after their return to their own land, they should enjoy a complete and uninterrupted tranquillity; but that they might not so deceive themselves, and their calamities be made doubly grievous by the disappointment, God by this prophet lets them know that they shall have tribulation; those promises of their prosperity were to be accomplished in the spiritual blessings of the kingdom of grace; as Christ has told his disciples they must expect persecution, and the promises they depend upon will be accomplished in the eternal blessings of the kingdom of glory. Daniel both *wrote* these things, and *spake them*, to intimate, that the church should be taught both by the scriptures, and by ministers preaching; both by the *written word*, and by *word of mouth*, and ministers in their preaching are to *tell the sum of the matters* that are written.

2. The vision itself, which foretels the revolutions of government in those nations, which the church of the Jews for the following ages was to be under the influence of.

1. He observed the *four winds to strive upon the great sea*, *ver. 2.* They strove which should blow strongest, and at length blow alone: This represents the contests among princes for empire, and the shakings of the nations by these contests, to which those mighty monarchies, he was now to have a prospect of, owed their rise. One wind from any point of the compass, if it blow hard, will cause a great commotion in the sea; but what a tumult must needs be raised when the *four winds strive* for mastery: That is it which the kings of the nations are contending for in their wars, which are as noisy and violent as the battle of the winds; but how is the poor sea tossed and torn, how terrible are its convulsions, how violent its convulsions, while the winds are at strife which shall have the sole power of troubling it?

Note, This world is like a stormy tempestuous sea, thanks to the proud ambitious winds that vex it.

2. He saw *four great beasts come up from the sea*, from the *troubled waters*, in which aspiring minds *love to fish*. The monarchs
No, lxxi.

and monarchies are represented by *beasts*, because too often it is by brutish rage and tyranny that they are raised and supported: These beasts were *diverse one from another*, *ver. 3.* of different shape, to note the different genius and complexion of the nations in whose hands they were lodged.

1. The first beast was *like a lion*, *ver. 4.* This was the Chaldean monarchy, that was fierce and strong, and made the kings absolute. This lion had *eagles wings*, with which to fly upon the prey: It notes the wonderful speed that Nebuchadnezzar made in his conquest of kingdoms. But he soon sees the *wings pluckt*, a full stop put to the career of their victorious arms: Divers countries that had been tributaries to them revolt from them, and make head against them; so that this monstrous animal, this winged lion, is made to *stand upon the feet as a man*, and a *man's heart is given to it*. It has lost the *heart of a lion*, which it had been famous for, (one of our English kings was called *Cœur de Lion*) hath lost its courage, and is become feeble and faint, dreading every thing, and daring nothing; they are *put in fear*, and made to know themselves to be *but men*. Sometimes the valour of a nation strangely sinks, and becomes cowardly and effeminate, so that what was the head of the nations in an age or two becomes the tail.

2. The second beast was *like a bear*, *ver. 5.* This was the Persian monarchy, less strong and generous than the former, but no less ravenous: This bear *raised up itself on one side* against the lion, and soon mastered it. It *raised up one dominion*: So some read it. Persia and Media, which in Nebuchadnezzar's image were the *two arms* in one breast, now set up a *joint government*. This bear had *three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth*, the remains of those nations it had devoured, which were the marks of its voraciousness; and yet an indication, that tho' it had devoured much, it could not devour all; there were some ribs still stuck in the teeth of it, which it could not conquer. Whereupon it was said to it, *Arise, devour much flesh*; let the bones, the ribs alone that cannot be conquered, and set upon that which will be an easier prey. The princes will stir up both the kings and the people to push on their conquests, and let nothing stand before them. Note, Conquests unjustly made, are but like those of the beasts of prey, and in this much worse, that the beasts prey not upon those of their own kind, as wicked and unreasonable men do.

3. The third beast was *like a leopard*, *ver. 6.* This was the Grecian monarchy founded by *Alexander the Great*, active, crafty, and cruel like a leopard; he had *four wings of a fowl*, the lion seems to have had but two wings; but the leopard has *four*, for tho' Nebuchadnezzar made great dispatch in his conquests, Alexander made much greater: In *six years* time he gained the whole empire of Persia, a great part beside of Asia, made himself master of Syria, Egypt, India, and other nations; this beast had *four heads*; upon Alexander's death his conquests were divided among his four chief captains; Sileucus Nicanor had Asia the great; Perdiccas, and after him Antigonus, had Asia the less; Cassander had Macedonia, and Ptolomeus had Egypt. *Dominion was given to this beast*; it was given of God from whom alone *promotion* comes.

4. The fourth beast was more fierce and formidable, and mischievous than any of them, unlike any of the other, nor is there any among the beasts of prey to which it might be compared, *ver. 7.* The learned are not agreed concerning this anonymous beast; some make it to be the Roman empire, which when it was in its glory comprehended ten kingdoms, Italy, France, Spain, Germany, Britain, Sarmatia, Pannonia, Asia, Greece, and Egypt; and then the little horn which rose by the fall of three of the other horns, *ver. 8.* they make to be the Turkish empire, which rose in the room of Asia, Greece, and Egypt. Others make this *fourth beast* to be the kingdom of Syria, the family of the Seleucidæ, which was very cruel and oppressive to the people of the Jews, as we find in Josephus, and the history of the Maccabees. And herein that empire was *diverse* from those which went before, that none of the preceding powers compelled the Jews to renounce their religion, but the kings of Syria did, and used them barbarously. Their armies and commanders were the *great iron teeth* with which they *devoured and brake in pieces* the people of God, and they *trampled upon the residue* of them. The *ten horns* are then supposed to be *ten kings* that reigned successively in Syria; and then the *little horn* is Antiochus Epiphanes, the last of the ten, who by one means or other undermined three of the kings, and got the government. He was a man of great ingenuity, and therefore is said to have *eyes like the eyes of a man*; and was very bold and daring, had a *mouth speaking great things*. We shall meet with him again in these prophecies.

9. ¶ I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the ancient of days did sit, whose garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wooll: his throne *was* like the fiery flame, and his wheels *as* burning fire. 10. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened. 11. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake:

I beheld, *even* till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12. As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time. 13. I saw in the night-vision, and behold, *one* like the son of man, came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed.

Whether we understand the fourth beast to signify the Syrian empire, or the Roman, or the former as the figure of the latter, it is plain these verses are intended for the comfort and support of the people of God, in reference to the persecutions they were likely to sustain, both from the one and from the other; and from all their proud enemies, in every age; for it is written for their learning, on whom the ends of the world are come, that they also, through patience and comfort of this scripture, might have hope.

Three things are here discovered that are very encouraging.

1. That there is a judgment to come, and God is the judge. Now men have *their day*, and every pretender thinks he should have *his day*, and struggles for it. But *he that sits in heaven laughs at them*, for he sees that *his day is coming*, Psal. xxxvii. 13. Ver. 9. *I beheld till the thrones were cast down*, not only the thrones of these beasts, but *all rule, authority, and power*, that is set up in opposition to the kingdom of God among men, 1 Cor. xv. 24. such are the thrones of the kingdoms of the world in comparison with God's kingdom, they that see them set up, need but wait a while, and they will see them *cast down*. *I beheld till thrones were set up*, so it may as well be read, Christ's throne, and the throne of his Father. One of the rabbins confesseth that these thrones are *set up*, one for God, another for the son of David. It is the judgment that is here set, ver. 10. Now this is intended, (1.) To speak God's wise and righteous government of the world by his providence; and an unspeakable satisfaction it gives to all good men, in the midst of the convulsions and revolutions of states and kingdoms, That *the Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens, and his kingdom ruleth over all*. Psal. ciii. 19. That *verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth*, Psal. lviii. 11. (2.) Perhaps it points at the destruction brought by the providence of God upon the empire of Syria, or that of Rome, for their tyrannizing over the people of God. But, (3.) It seems principally designed to describe the last judgment, for tho' it follow not immediately upon the dominion of the fourth beast; nay, tho' it be yet to come, perhaps many ages to come, yet it was intended, that in every age the people of God should encourage themselves under their troubles, with the belief and prospect of it; Enoch the seventh from Adam prophesied of it, Jud. 14. Doth the mouth of the enemy *speak great things*, ver. 8. Here are far greater things which the mouth of the Lord has spoken. Many of the New Testament predictions of the judgment to come have a plain allusion to this vision here; especially St John's vision of it, Rev. xx. 11, 12.

(1.) The judge is the *ancient of days* himself, God the Father, the glory of whose presence is here described. He is called the *ancient of days*, because he is God *from everlasting to everlasting*. Among men we reckon that *with the ancient is wisdom*, and *days shall speak*, shall not all flesh then be silent before him who is the *ancient of days*? The glory of the judge is here set forth by his garment, which was *white as snow*, noting his splendor and purity in all the administrations of his justice; and the *hair of his head* clean and white, *as the pure wooll*; that as the white and hoary head he may appear venerable.

(2.) The throne is very formidable. It is *like the fiery flame*, dreadful to the wicked that shall be summoned before it. And the *throne* being moveable upon wheels, or at least the chariot in which he rode his circuit, the *wheels* thereof are *as burning fire*, to devour the adversaries, for *our God is a consuming fire*, and with him are *everlasting burnings*, Isa. xxxiii. 14. This is enlarged upon, ver. 10. As to all his faithful friends there *proceeds out of the throne of God and the Lamb a pure river of water of life*, Rev. xxii. 1. so to all his implacable enemies there *issues and comes forth from his throne, a fiery stream, a stream of brimstone*, Isa. xxx. 33. a fire that shall *devour before him*, Isa. xxx. 33. He is a swift witness, and his word a word upon the wheels.

(3.) The attendants are numerous and very splendid; the Shechinah is always attended *with angels*, it is so here, ver. 10. *a thousand thousand minister to him*; and *ten thousand times ten thousand stand before him*: It is his glory that he has such attendance, but much more his glory that he neither needs them, nor can be benefited by them. See how numerous the heavenly hosts are, there are *thousands of angels*; and how obsequious they were, they *stand before God*, ready to go on his errands, and to take the first intimation of his will and pleasure. They will particularly be employed as ministers of his justice in the last judgment; when the Son of

man shall come, and all the holy angels *with him*. Enoch prophesied, That the Lord should come with his *holy myriads*.

(4.) The process is fair and unexceptionable; *the judgment is set*; publicly and openly, that all may have recourse to it, and *the books are opened*; as in courts of judgment, among men, the proceedings are in writing, and upon record, which is laid open when the cause comes to a hearing; the examination of witnesses is produced, and affidavits read to clear the matter of fact, the statute and common-law books consulted to find out what is the law, so in the judgment of the great day the equity of the sentence will be as incontestably evident, as if there were *books opened* to justify it.

2. That the proud and cruel enemies of the church of God will certainly be reckoned with and brought down in due time, ver. 11, 12. This is here represented to us,

(1.) In the destroying of the fourth beast. God's quarrel with this beast is *because of the voice of the great words, which the horn spake*, bidding defiance to heaven, and triumphing over all that is sacred; this provokes God more than any thing, for the *enemy is behave himself proudly*, Deut. xxxii. 27. Therefore Pharaoh must be humbled because he hath said, *Who is the Lord?* and hath said, *I will pursue, I will overtake*. Enoch foretold, that therefore the Lord would come to *judge the world*, that he might *convince all that are ungodly of their hard speeches*, Jude 15. Note, Great words are but idle words, for which men must give account in the great day. And see what comes of this beast that talks so big, *he is slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame*. The Syrian empire, after Antiochus, was destroyed, he himself died of a miserable disease, his family was rooted out, the kingdom wasted by the Parthians and Armenians, and at length made a province of the Roman empire by Pompey. And the Roman empire itself, (if we take that for the fourth beast) after it began to persecute Christianity declined and wasted away, and the body of it was destroyed. *So shall all thine enemies perish, O Lord, and be slain before thee*.

(2.) In the diminishing and weakning of the other three beasts, ver. 12. they had *their dominion taken away*, and so were disabled to do the mischiefs they had done to the church and people of God, but *a prolonging in life was given them, for a time and a season*, a set time, the bounds of which they could not pass. The power of the foregoing kingdoms was quite broken, but the people of them still remained in a mean, and weak, and low, condition; we may allude to this, in describing the remainders of sin in the hearts of good people; they have corruptions in them, the lives of which are prolonged, so that they are not perfectly free from sin: But the *dominion of them is taken away*, so that sin, doth not *reign in their mortal bodies*. And thus God deals with his church's enemies; sometimes he *breaks the teeth* of them, (Psal. iii. 7.) when he doth not break the neck of them; crusheth the persecution, but reprieves the persecutors, that they may have space to repent. And it is fit that God in doing his own work should take his own time and way.

3. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up and kept up in the world, in despite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness. Let the heathen rage and fret as long as they please, God will *set his king upon his holy hill of Zion*. Daniel sees this in vision, and comforts himself and his friends with the prospect of it. This is the same with Nebuchadnezzar's foresight of the *stone cut out of the mountain without hands*, which broke in pieces the image; but in this vision there is much more of pure gospel than in that.

1. The Messiah is here called *the son of man*; *one like unto the son of man*; for he was made in the *likeness of sinful flesh*, was found in *fashion as a man*. *I saw one like unto the son of man*, one exactly agreeing with the idea formed in the divine counsels of him, that in the fulness of time was to be the mediator between God and man. He is *like unto the son of man*, but is indeed the Son of God. Our Saviour seems plainly to refer to this vision, when he saith, Joh. v. 27. that the Father has therefore *given him authority to execute judgment*, because he is *the son of man*, and because he is the person whom Daniel saw in vision, to whom a *kingdom and dominion* were to be given.

2. He is said to *come with the clouds of heaven*. Some refer this to his incarnation; he descended *in the clouds of heaven*, came into the world unseen, as the glory of the Lord took possession of the temple *in a cloud*. The empires of the world were beasts that *rose out of the sea*; but Christ's kingdom is from above, he is the *Lord from heaven*. I think it is rather to be referred to his ascension; when he returned to the Father, the eye of his disciples followed him, till *a cloud received him out of their sight*, Acts i. 9. He made that cloud his chariot, wherein he rid triumphantly to the upper world. He comes swiftly, irresistibly, and comes in state, for he *comes with the clouds of heaven*.

3. He is here represented as having a mighty interest in heaven. When the cloud received him out of the sight of his disciples, it is worth while to enquire (as the sons of the prophets concerning Elijah in a like case) whether it carried him, where it lodged him; and here we are told abundantly to our satisfaction, that *he came to the ancient of days*, for he ascended to *his Father and our Father, to his God and our God*, John xx. 17. from him he came forth, and to him he returns, to be glorified with

with him, and to sit down at his right hand. It was with a great deal of pleasure that he said, *Now I go to him that sent me.* But was he welcome? Yes, no doubt he was, for *they brought him near before him*; he was introduced into his Father's presence, with the attendance and adorations of all the angels of God, Heb. i. 6. *God caused him to draw near and approach to him*, as an advocate and undertaker for us, Jer. xxx. 31. that we through him might be made nigh. By this solemn near approach he made to the ancients of days, it appears that the Father accepted the sacrifice he offered, and the satisfaction he made, and was entirely well pleased with all he had done. He was brought near as our high-priest, who for us enters within the vail, and as our fore-runner.

He is here represented as having a mighty influence upon this earth, ver. 14. when he went to be glorified with his Father he had a *power given him over all flesh*, John xvii. 2, 5. with the prospect of this Daniel and his friends are here comforted, that not only the dominion of the church's enemies shall be taken away, ver. 12. But the church's head and best friend shall have the dominion given him; to him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, Phil. ii. 9, 10. To him is given glory and a kingdom, and it is given by him who has an unquestionable right to give it, which, some think with an eye to these words, our Saviour teaches us to acknowledge in the close of the Lord's prayer, *For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory.* It is here foretold, that the kingdom of the exalted Redeemer shall be, (1.) An universal kingdom, the only universal monarchy, whatever others have pretended to, or aimed at. *All people, nations, and languages, shall fear him*, and be under his jurisdiction, either as his willing subjects, or as his conquered captives; to be either ruled or over-ruled by him. One way or other the kingdoms of the world shall all become his kingdoms. (2.) An everlasting kingdom. His dominion shall not pass away to any successor, much less to any invader, and his kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed. Even the gates of hell, all the infernal powers and policies, shall not prevail against it. The church shall continue militant to the end of time, and triumphant to the endless ages of eternity.

15. ¶ I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16. I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this: so he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever. 19. Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass, which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet, 20. And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell, even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. 21. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22. Until the ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. 23. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. 24. And the ten horns out of this kingdom, are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall arise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand, until a time and times, and the dividing of time. 26. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume, and to destroy it unto the end. 27. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28. Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Here is, 1. The deep impressions which these visions made upon the prophet. God in them put honour upon him, and gave him satisfaction, yet not without a great alloy of pain and perplexity, ver. 15. *I Daniel was grieved in my spirit, in the midst of my body.* The word here used for the body properly signifies a sheath or scabbard, for the body is no more to the soul; that is the weapon, it is that which we are principally to take care of. The visions of my head troubled me, and again, ver. 28. *my cogitations much troubled me.* The manner in which these things were discovered to him quite overwhelmed him, and put his thoughts so much to the stretch, that his spirits failed him, and the trance he was in tired him, and made him fainty. The things themselves that were discovered amazed and astonished him, and put him into a confusion, till by degrees he recollected and conquered himself, and set the comforts of the vision over-against the terrors of it.

2. His earnest desire to understand the meaning of them, ver. 16. *I came near to one of them that stood by, to one of the angels that appeared attending the Son of man in his glory, and asked him the truth, i. e. the true intent and meaning of all this.* Note, It is a very desirable thing to take the right and full sense of what we see and hear from God; and those that would know must ask by faithful and fervent prayer, and by accomplishing a diligent search.

3. The key that was given him to let him into the understanding of this vision. The angel told him, and told him so plainly, that he made him know the interpretation of the thing; and so made him somewhat more easy.

1. The great beasts are great kings and their kingdoms, great monarchs and their monarchies, which shall arise out of the earth, as those beasts did out of the sea, ver. 17. They are but *Terræ filii*, from beneath, favour of the earth, and their foundation is in the dust; they are of the earth earthly, and they are written in the dust, and to the dust they shall return.

2. Daniel pretty well understands the three first beasts, but concerning the fourth he desires to be better informed, because it differed so much from the rest, and was exceeding dreadful, and not only so, but very mischievous, for it devoured and brake in pieces, ver. 19. Perhaps this was it that put Daniel into such a fright, and this part of the visions of his head troubled him more than any of the rest. But especially he desired to know what the little horn was that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, and whose countenance was more fearless and formidable than that of any of his fellows, ver. 20. And this he was most inquisitive about, because it was this horn that made war with the saints, and prevailed against them, ver. 21. while no more is intimated, but that the children of men make war with one another, and prevail against one another; the prophet doth not shew himself so much concerned, let the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth, and be dashed in pieces one against another: but when they make war with the saints, when the precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, are broken as earthen pitchers, it is time to ask, What is the meaning of this? Will the Lord cast off his people? Will he suffer their enemies to trample upon them, and triumph over them? What is this same horn that shall prevail so far against the saints?

To this his interpreter answers, ver. 23, 24, 25. That this fourth beast is a fourth kingdom, that shall devour the whole earth, or, as it may be read, the whole land. That the ten horns are ten kings, and the little horn is another king that shall subdue three kings, and shall be very abusive to God and his people, shall carry it (1.) Very impiously towards God, he shall speak great words against the most High, setting him and his authority, and justice, at defiance. (2.) Very imperiously towards the people of God; he shall wear out the saints of the most High; he will not cut them off at once, but wear them out by long oppressions, and a constant course of hardships put upon them; ruining their estates, and weakening their families. The design of Satan has been to wear out the saints of the most High, that they may be no more in remembrance; but the attempt is vain, for while the world stands, God will have a church in it. He shall think to change times and laws, to abolish all the ordinances and institutions of religion, and to bring every body to say and do just as he would have them. He shall trample upon laws and customs, human and divine; *Diruit, ædificat, mutat quadrata rotundis*, as if he meant to alter even the ordinances of heaven themselves. And in these daring attempts he shall for a time prosper and have success; they shall be given into his hand until time, times, and half a time; i. e. for three years and a half; that famous prophetic measure of time which we meet with in the Revelation, which is sometimes called forty-two months, sometimes one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which come all to one. But at the end of that time the judgment shall sit, and take away his dominion, ver. 26. which he expounds, ver. 11. the beast was slain and his body destroyed. And as Mr Mede reads, ver. 12. *As to the rest of the beast, i. e. the ten horns, especially the little ruffling horn, (as he calls it) they had their dominion taken away.*

Now the question is, Who is this enemy, whose rise, reign, and ruin, is here foretold? Interpreters are not agreed, some will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Seleucidæ, and the little

little horn to be Antiochus, and shew the accomplishment of all this in the history of the Maccabees, so Junius, Piscator, Polanus, Broughton, and many others; but others will have the fourth kingdom to be that of the Romans, and the *little horn* to be Julius Cæsar, and the succeeding emperors, saith Calvin. The antichrist, the papal kingdom, saith Mr Joseph Mede, that *wicked one*, which as this *little horn* is to be consumed by the *brightness of Christ's second coming*: and the pope assumes a power to *change times and laws*, i. e. an absolute despotick power; *potestas ætjoxeçtoevnñ*, as he calls it. Others make the *little horn* to be the *Turkish empire*, so Luther, Vatablus, and others. Now I cannot prove either side to be in the wrong, and therefore since prophecies sometimes have many fulfillings, and we ought to give scripture its full latitude, in this (as in many other controversies) am willing to allow, that they are both in the right: and that this prophecy has *primary reference* to the Syrian empire, and was intended for the encouragement of the Jews that suffered under Antiochus, that they might see even these melancholy times foretold, but might foresee a glorious issue of them at last, and the final overthrow of their proud oppressors: and, which is best of all, might foresee, not long after, the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world; with the hopes of which, it was usual with the former prophets to comfort the people of God in their distresses. But yet it has a *further reference*, and foretels the like persecuting power and rage in Rome heathen, and no less in Rome papal, against the Christian religion that was in Antiochus against the pious Jews and their religion. And St John in his visions and prophecies which point primarily at Rome, has plain reference in many particulars to these visions here.

3. He has a joyful prospect given him of the prevalency of God's kingdom among men, and its victory over all opposition at last. And it is very observable, that in the midst of the predictions of the force and fury of the enemies, this is brought in abruptly, *ver. 18.* and again, *ver. 22.* before it comes in the course of the vision to be interpreted, *ver. 26, 27.* And this also refers (1.) To the *prosperous days* of the Jewish church after it had weathered the storm under Antiochus, and the power which the Maccabees obtained over their enemies. (2.) To the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the preaching of his gospel. *For judgment Christ comes into this world*, to rule by his Spirit, and to make all his saints *kings and priests to their God*. (3.) To the second coming of Jesus Christ, when the saints shall judge the world, shall sit down with him on his throne, and triumph in the compleat downfall of the devil's kingdom.

Let us see what is here foretold, (1.) *The ancient of days shall come*, *ver. 22.* God shall judge the world by his Son, to whom he hath committed all judgment; and as an earnest of that, he comes for the deliverance of his oppressed people, comes for the setting up of his kingdom in the world. (2.) *The judgment shall sit*, *ver. 26.* God will make it to appear, that he judgeth in the earth, and will, both in wisdom and equity plead his people's righteous cause. At the great day he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he has ordained. (3.) *The dominion of the enemy shall be taken away*, *ver. 26.* All Christ's enemies shall be made his foot-stool, and shall be consumed and destroyed to the end: these words the apostle useth concerning the man of sin, *2 Thess. ii. 8.* he shall be consumed with the spirit of Christ's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming. (4.) *Judgment is given to the saints of the most High.* The apostles are intrusted with the preaching of a gospel by which the world shall be judged: all the saints by their faith and obedience condemn an unbelieving disobedient world; in Christ their head they shall judge the world, shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel, *Mat. xix. 28.* See what reason we have to honour them that fear the Lord; how mean and despicable soever the saints now appear in the eye of the world, and how much contempt soever is poured upon them, they are the *saints of the most High*, they are near and dear to God, and he owns them for his, and judgment is given to them. (5.) That which is most insisted upon is, that the *saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever*, *ver. 18.* And again, *ver. 22.* the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. And again, *ver. 27.* The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High. Far be it from us to infer from hence, that dominion is founded on grace, or that this will warrant any under pretence of saintship to usurp kingship; no, *Christ's kingdom is not of this world*; but this speaks the spiritual dominion of the saints over their own lusts and corruptions, and their victories over Satan and his temptations, and the triumphs of the martyrs over death and its terrors. It likewise promiseth that the gospel kingdom shall be set up, a kingdom of light, holiness, and love, a kingdom of grace, the privileges and comforts of which now, under the heavens, shall be the earnest and first fruits of the kingdom of glory, in the heavens: when the empire became Christian, and princes used their power for the defence and advancement of Christianity, then the saints possessed the kingdom. The saints rule by the Spirit's ruling in them, and this is the victory overcoming the world, even their faith; and by the making of the kingdoms of this world to become Christ's kingdom. But the full accomplishment of this

will be in the everlasting happiness of the saints, the kingdom that cannot be moved, which we, according to his promise, look for; that is the *greatness of the kingdom*, the crown of glory that fades not away; that is the *everlasting kingdom*; see what an emphasis is laid upon this, *ver. 18.* the saints shall possess the kingdom *for ever, even for ever and ever*: and the reason is, because he whose saints they are is the *most High*, and his kingdom is an *everlasting kingdom*, *ver. 27.* His is so, and therefore theirs shall be so; *because I live, you shall live also*, *John xiv. 19.* His kingdom is theirs; they reckon themselves exalted in his exaltation; and desire no greater honour and satisfaction to themselves, than that *all dominions should serve and obey him*, as they shall do, *ver. 27.* They shall either be brought into subjection to his golden scepter, or brought to destruction by his iron rod.

Daniel, in the close, when he ends that matter, tells us what impressions this vision made upon him; it overwhelmed his spirits to that degree, that his countenance was changed, and it made him look pale; but he kept the matter in his heart. Note, The heart must be the treasury and store-house of divine things; there we must *hide God's word*, as the Virgin Mary kept the sayings of Christ, *Luke ii. 51.* Daniel kept the matter in his heart with design not to keep it from the church, but to keep it for the church; that what he had received from the Lord, he might fully and faithfully deliver to the people. Note, It concerns God's prophets and ministers to treasure up the things of God in their minds, and there to digest them well. If we would have God's word ready in our mouths when we have occasion for it, we must keep it in our hearts at all times.

C H A P. VIII.

The visions and prophecies of this chapter, look only and entirely at the events that were then shortly to come to pass in the monarchies of Persia and Greece, and seem not to have any further reference at all. Nothing is here said of the Chaldean monarchy, for that was now just at its period, and therefore this chapter is written not in Chaldee, as the six foregoing chapters were, for the benefit of the Chaldeans, but in Hebrew, and so are the rest of the chapters to the end of the book, for the service of the Jews; that they might know what troubles were before them, and what the issue of them would be, and might provide accordingly. In this chapter we have (1.) The vision it self of the ram, and the he-goat, and the little horn that should fight and prevail against the people of God, for a certain limited time, *ver. 1—14.* (2.) The interpretation of this vision by an angel, shewing, That the ram signified the Persian empire, the he-goat the Grecian, and the little horn a king of the Grecian monarchy, that should set himself against the Jews and religion, which was Antiochus Epiphanes, *ver. 15—27.* The Jewish church from its beginnings, had been all along more or less blessed with prophets, men divinely inspired, to explain God's mind to them in his providences, and give them some prospect, of what was coming upon them; but soon after Ezra's time divine inspiration ceased, and there were no more any prophet till the gospel day dawned. And therefore the events of that time were here foretold by Daniel, and left upon record, that even then God might not leave himself without witnesses, or them without a guide.

1. **I**N the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar, a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2. And I saw in a vision (and it came to pass when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam) and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river, a ram which had two horns, and the two horns were high: but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4. I saw the ram pushing west-ward, and north-ward, and south-ward: so that no beast might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand, but he did according to his will, and became great. 5. And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west, on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler

choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns, and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. 8. Therefore the he-goat waxed very great, and when he was strong, the great horn was broken: and for it came up four notable ones, towards the four winds of heaven. 9. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven, and it cast down some of the host, and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground, and it practised and prospered. 13. ¶ Then I heard one faint speaking, and another faint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be troden under foot? 14. And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

Here is, 1. The date of this vision, *ver. 1.* It was in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, which proved to be his last year, as many reckon; so that this chapter also should be in order of time before the fifth. That Daniel might not be surprized at the destruction of Babylon now at hand, God gives him a foresight of the destruction of other kingdoms hereafter, that in their day had been as potent as that of Babylon. Could we foresee the changes that shall be hereafter, when we are gone, we should the less admire, and be less affected with, the changes in our own day, for that which is done, is that which shall be done, Eccl. i. 9. Then it was that a vision appeared to me, even to me Daniel. Here he solemnly attests the truth of it, it was to him, even to him, that the vision was shewn; he was the eye-witness of it. And this vision puts him in mind of a former vision, which appeared to him at the first, in the first year of this reign, which he makes mention of, because this vision was an explication and confirmation of that, and points at many of the same events. That seems to have been a dream, a vision in his sleep, this seems to have been when he was awake.

2. The scene of this vision, the place where that was laid, was in Shushan the palace, one of the royal seats of the kings of Persia, situated on the banks of the river Ulai, which surrounded the city; it was in the province of Elam, that part of Persia which lay next to Babylon. Daniel was not there in person, for he was now in Babylon, a captive, in some employment under Belshazzar, and might not go to such a distant country, especially being now an enemy's country, but he was there in vision; as Ezekiel, when a captive in Babylon, was often brought in the spirit to the land of Israel. Note, The soul may be at liberty when the body is in captivity; for when we are bound, the Spirit of the Lord is not bound. The vision related to that country, and therefore there he was made to fancy himself to be as strongly as if he had really been there.

3. The vision itself, and the process of it.

1. He saw a ram with two horns, *ver. 3.* This was the second monarchy, of which the kingdoms of Media and Persia were the two horns. The horns were very high, but that which came up last was the higher, and got the start of the former: So the last shall be first, and the first last. The kingdom of Persia which rose last, in Cyrus, became more eminent than that of the Medes.

2. He saw this ram pushing all about him with his horns, *ver. 4.* westward, towards Babylon, Syria, Greece, and the lesser Asia; northward, towards the Lydians, Armenians, and Scythians, and southward, towards Arabia, Ethiopia, and Egypt, for all these nations did the Persian empire one time or other make attempts upon, for the enlarging of their dominion. And at last it became so powerful, that no beasts might stand before him. This ram that is of a species of animals that uses to be preyed upon, becomes formidable even to the beasts of prey themselves; so that there was no standing before him, no escape from him, none that could deliver out of his hand, but all must yield to him: The kings of Persia did according to their will, prospered in all their ways abroad, and had an uncontrollable power at home, and became great; he thought himself great, because he did what he would: But to do good, is that which makes men truly great.

No. LXXII.

3. He saw this ram overcome by a he-goat: He was considering the ram, and wondering so weak an animal should come to be so prevalent, with expectation what would be the issue; and behold a he-goat came, *ver. 5.* This was Alexander the Great, the son of Philip king of Macedonia; he came from the west, from Greece which lay west from Persia; he fetched a great compass with his army, he came upon the face of the whole earth; he did in effect conquer the world, and then sat down and wept because there was not another world to be conquered. *Unus Pellæo juveni non sufficit orbis.* This he-goat (a creature famed for comeliness in going, *Prov. xxx. 31.*) went on with incredible swiftness, so that he touched not the ground, so lightly did he move; he rather seemed to fly above the ground, than to go upon the ground; or, none touched him in the earth, i. e. he met with little or no opposition. This he-goat, or buck, had a notable horn between his eyes, like an unicorn: He had strength, and knew his own strength, he saw himself a match for all his neighbours; Alexander pushed his conquests on so fast, and with so much fury, that none of the kingdoms he attacked had courage to make a stand, or give check to the progress of his victorious arms. In six years he made himself master of the greatest part of the then known world. Well might he be called a notable horn for his name still lives in history, as one of the most celebrated commanders in war that ever the world knew. Alexander's victories and achievements are still the entertainment of the ingenious. This he-goat came to the ram that had two horns, *ver. 6.* Alexander with his victorious army attacked the kingdom of Persia, an army consisting of no more than thirty thousand foot, and five thousand horse. He ran unto him to surprize him ere he could get intelligence of his motions, in the fury of his power; he came close to the ram. Alexander with his army came up with Darius Codomannus, then emperor of Persia, being moved with choler against him, *ver. 7.* It was with the greatest violence that Alexander pushed on his war against Darius, who tho' he brought vast numbers into the field, yet for want of conduct was an unequal match for him, so that Alexander was too hard for him when ever he engaged him; smote him, cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him, which three expressions, some think, refer to the three famous victories that Alexander obtained over Darius, at Granicum, at Issus, and at Arbela, by which he was at length totally routed; in the last battle had six hundred thousand men killed, so that Alexander became absolute master of all the Persian empire; broke his two horns, the kingdoms of Media and Persia; the ram that had destroyed all before him, *ver. 4.* now is himself destroyed; Darius has no power to stand before Alexander, nor has he any friends or allies to help to deliver him out of his hand. Note, Those kingdoms that when they had power abused it, and because none could oppose them, withheld not themselves from the doing of any wrong, may expect to have their power at length taken from them, and to be served in their own kind, *Isa. xxxiii. 1.*

4. He saw that he-goat made hereby very considerable, but the great horn that had done all this execution was broken, *ver. 8.* Alexander was about twenty years old when he began his wars, when he was about twenty-six he conquered Darius, and became master of the whole Persian empire; but when he was about thirty-two or thirty-three years of age, when he was strong, in his full strength he was broken; not killed in war, in the bed of honour, but died of a drunken surfeit; or, as some suspect by poison; and left no child living behind him, to enjoy that which he had endlessly laboured for, but left a lasting monument of the vanity of worldly pomp and power, and their insufficiency to make a man happy.

5. He saw this kingdom divided into four parts, and that instead of that one great horn there came up four notable ones, Alexander's four captains to whom he bequeathed his conquests; and he had so much, that when it was divided among four, they had each of them enough for any one man: These four notable horns were towards the four winds of heaven, the same with the four heads of the leopard, *chap. vii. 6.* The kingdoms of Syria and Egypt, Asia and Greece, Syria lying to the east, and Greece to the west, Asia minor to the north, and Egypt to the south. Note, Those that heap up riches, know not who shall gather them, nor whose all those things shall be which they have provided.

6. He saw a little horn that became a great persecutor of the church and people of God; and this was the principal thing that was intended to be shewed him in this vision; as afterwards, *chap. xi. 30, &c.* All agree that this was Antiochus Epiphanes, so he called himself the illustrious, but others called him Antiochus Epimanes, Antiochus the furious. He is called here as before, *chap. vii. 8.* a little horn, because he was in his original contemptible, there were others between him and the kingdom, and he was of a base servile disposition, and had nothing in him of princely qualities; and had been for some time a hostage and prisoner at Rome, from whence he made his escape, and tho' the youngest brother, and his elder living, got the kingdom: He waxed exceeding great towards the south, for he seized upon Egypt, and towards the east, for he invaded Persia and Armenia: But

But that which is here especially taken notice of, is the mischief that he did to the people of the Jews. They are not expressly named, for prophecies must not be too plain; but they are here described, so that it would be easy for those who understood scripture language to know who were meant; and the Jews having notice of this before, might be awakened to prepare themselves and their children before-hand for these suffering, trying, times.

1. He set himself against the pleasant land, i. e. the land of Israel, so called, because it was the glory of all lands, for fruitfulness, and all the delights of human life. But especially for the tokens of God's presence in it, and its being blessed with divine revelations and institutions; it was mount Zion that was beautiful for situation, and the joy of the whole earth, Psal. xlviii. 2. The pleasantness of that land was, that there the Messiah was to be born, who would be both the consolation and the glory of his people Israel. Note, We have reason to reckon that a pleasant place which is a holy place, in which God dwells, and where we may have opportunity of communing with him. Surely, It is good to be here.

2. He fought against the host of heaven, i. e. the people of God, the church, which is the kingdom of heaven, the church-militant here on earth. The saints being born from above, and citizens of heaven, and doing the will of God by his grace in some measure, as the angels of heaven do it, may be well called a heavenly host. Or, the priests and Levites, who were employed in the service of the tabernacle, and there warred a good warfare, were this host of heaven. These Antiochus set himself against, he waxed great to the host of heaven, in opposition to them, and in defiance of them.

3. He cast down some of the host, that is, of the stars (for they are called the host of heaven) to the ground, and stamped upon them. Some of those that were most eminent both in church and state, that were burning and shining lights in their generation, he either forced to comply with his idolatries, or put them to death; he got them into his hands, and then trampled upon them, and triumphed over them; as good old Eleazar and the seven brethren, whom he put to death with cruel tortures, because they would not eat swines flesh, 2 Mac. vi. 7. He gloried in it, that herein he insulted heaven itself, and exalted his throne above the stars of God, Isa. xiv. 13.

4. He magnified himself even to the prime of the host: He set himself against the high-priest, Onias, whom he deprived of his dignity; or rather against God himself, who was Israel's king of old; who reigns for ever as Zion's king; who himself heads his own hosts that fight his battles: Against him Antiochus magnified himself; as Pharaoh, when he said, Who is the Lord? Note, Those who persecute the people of God, persecute God himself.

5. He took away the daily sacrifice; the morning and evening lamb, which God appointed to be offered every day upon his altar to his honour, Antiochus forbade and restrained the offering of. No doubt, he took away all other sacrifices, but the daily sacrifice only is mentioned, because that was the greatest loss of all other; for in that they kept up their constant communion with God, which they preferred before that which is only occasional; God's people reckon their daily sacrifices, their morning and evening exercises of devotion, the most needful of their daily business, and the most delightful of their daily comforts, and would not for all the world part with them.

6. He cast down the place of his sanctuary. He did not burn and demolish the temple, but he cast it down, when he profaned it, made it the temple of Jupiter Olympius, and set up his image in it. He also cast down the truth to the ground, trampled upon the book of the law; that word of truth, tore it, and burnt it, and did what he could to have destroyed it quite, that it might have been lost and forgotten for ever. These were the projects of that wicked prince: In these he practised. And, would you think it? in these he prospered: He carried the matter very far, seemed to have gained his point, and went near to have extirpated that holy religion which God's right hand had planted.

But lest he or any other should triumph, as if herein he had prevailed against God himself, and been too hard for him, the matter is here explained, and set in a true light. (1.) He could not have done this, if God had not permitted him to do it; could have had no power against Israel, unless it had been given him from above. God put this power into his hand, and gave him an host against the daily sacrifice: God's providence put that sword into his hand by which he was enabled thus to bear down all before him. Note, We ought to eye and own the hand of God in all the enterprizes, and all the successes of the church's enemies against the church: They are but the rod in God's hand. (2.) God would not have permitted it, if his people had not provoked him to do so. It is by reason of transgression, the transgression of Israel, to correct them for that, that Antiochus is employed to give them all this trouble. Note, When the pleasant land, and all its pleasant things are laid waste, it must be acknowledged that sin is the procuring cause of all the desolation. Who gave Jacob the spoil? Did not the Lord, be against whom we have sinned? Isa. xlii. 24. The great

transgression of the Jews after the captivity (when they were cured of idolatry) was a contempt and profanation of the holy things; snuffing at the service of God, bringing the torn and the lame for sacrifice, as if the table of the Lord were a contemptible thing, so we find Mal. i. 7, 8, &c. And that the priests were guilty of this, Mal. ii. 1, 8. and therefore God sent Antiochus to take away the daily sacrifice, and cast down the place of his sanctuary. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the privileges of his house, that despise and profane them; and to make them know the worth of ordinances by the want of them, that would not know it by the enjoyment of them.

Lastly, He heard the time of this calamity limited and determined; not the time when it should come, that is not here fixed, because God would have his people always prepared for it, but how long it should last, that when they had no more any prophets to tell them how long, (Psal. lxxiv. 9. which psalm seems to have been calculated for this dark and doleful day) they might have this prophecy to give them a prospect of deliverance in due time. Now concerning this, we have here,

1. The question asked concerning it, ver. 13. Observe, (1.) By whom the question was put. I heard one saint speaking to this purpose; and then another saint seconded him, O that we knew how long this trouble will last! The angels here are called saints, for they are holy ones, chap. iv. 13. the holy myriads, Jude 14. The angels concern themselves in the affairs of the church, and enquire concerning them; if as here concerning its temporal salvations, much more do they desire to look into the great salvation, 1 Pet. i. 12. One saint spoke of the thing, and another enquired concerning it: Thus John, that lay in Christ's bosom, was beckoned to by Peter to ask Christ a question, John xiii. 23, 24. (2.) To whom the question was put. He said unto Palmoni that spake. Some make this certain saint to be a superior angel that understood more than the rest, to whom therefore they came with their enquiries. Others make it to be the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is the unknown One. Palmoni seems to be compounded of Peloni Almoni, which is used Ruth iv. 1. for *ho such a one*, and 2 Kings vi. 8. for *such a place*. Christ was yet the nameless One; wherefore askest thou after my name, seeing it is secret? Judg. xiii. 18. He is the numberer of secrets, as some translate it, for from him there is nothing hid. The wonderful numberer, so others. His name is called Wonderful. Note, If we would know the mind of God, we must apply ourselves to Jesus Christ, who lay in the bosom of the Father, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not hid from us, but hid for us. (3.) The question itself that was asked. How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice? i. e. How long shall the prohibition of it continue? How long shall the pleasant land be made unpleasant by that severe interdict? how long shall the transgression of desolation, i. e. the image of Jupiter, that great transgression which makes all our sacred things desolate, how long shall that stand in the temple? How long shall the sanctuary and the host, the holy place, and the holy persons that minister in it, be trodden under foot by the oppression? Note, Angels are concerned for the prosperity of the church on earth, and desirous to see an end of its desolations. The angel asked for the satisfaction of Daniel, not doubting but he was desirous to know, how long these calamities should last? The question takes it for granted, that they should not last always; the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, tho' it may come upon their lot. Christ comforted himself in his sufferings with this, The things concerning me have an end, Luke xxii. 37. and so may the church in her's. But it is desirable to know how long they shall last, that we may provide accordingly.

2. The answer given to this question, ver. 14. Christ gives instruction to the holy angels, for they are our fellow servants; but here the answer was given to Daniel, because for his sake the question was asked; he said unto me. God sometimes gives in great favours to his people, in answer to the enquiries and requests of their friends for them. Now Christ assures him, (1.) That the trouble shall end; it shall continue two thousand and three hundred days, and no longer. So many evenings and mornings, so the word is, so many *νυχθήμεραι*, so many natural days, reckoned as in the beginning of Genesis by the evenings and mornings; because it was the evening and the morning sacrifice that they most lamented the loss of; and thought the time passed very slowly while they wanted them. Some make the morning and the evening in this number to stand for two, and then two thousand three hundred evenings and as many mornings, will make but one thousand one hundred and fifty days; and about so many days it was that the daily sacrifice was interrupted: and this comes nearer to the computation, chap. vii. 26. of a time, times, and the dividing of a time. But it is less forced to understand them of so many natural days; two thousand three hundred days make six years and three months, and about eighteen days; and just so long they reckon from the defection of the people procured by Menelaus the high-priest in the hundred and forty-second year of the kingdom of the Seleucidæ, the sixth month

month of that year, and the sixth day of the month, (so Josephus dates it) to the cleansing of the sanctuary, and the re-establishment of religion among them, which was in the hundred and forty-eighth year, the ninth month, and the twenty-fifth day of the month, 1 Macc. i. 54. God reckons the time of his peoples affliction by days, for in all their afflictions he is afflicted; Rev. ii. 10. thou shalt have tribulation ten days. (2.) He assures him, that they should see better days after, *then shall the sanctuary be cleansed*. Note, The cleansing of the sanctuary is a happy token for good to any people; when they begin to be reformed, they will soon be relieved. Tho' the righteous God may for the correction of his people suffer his sanctuary to be profaned for a while, yet the jealous God will for his own glory see to the cleansing of it in due time. Christ died to *cleanse* his church, and he will so cleanse it as at length to present it *blameless* to himself.

15. ¶ And it came to pass when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16. And I heard a mans voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this *man* to understand the vision. 17. So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man; for at the time of the end *shall* be the vision. 18. Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19. And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end *shall* be. 20. The ram which thou sawest having two horns, *are* the kings of Media and Persia. 21. And the rough goat *is* the king of Grecia, and the great horn that *is* between his eyes, is the first king. 22. Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. 23. And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand, and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the prince of princes, but he shall be broken without hand. 26. And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told, is true, wherefore shut thou up the vision, for it *shall* be for many days. 27. And I Daniel fainted and was sick *certain* days; afterward I rose up, and did the kings business, and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

Here is, 1. Daniel's earnest desire to have this vision explained to him, *ver. 15. I sought the meaning*. Note, Those that rightly know the things of God, cannot but desire to know more and more of them, and to be led further into the mystery of them. And those that would find the meaning of what they have seen or heard from God must seek it, and seek it diligently; *seek and ye shall find*. Daniel considered the thing, compared it with former discoveries, to try if he could understand it; but especially he sought by prayer, as he had done, *chap. ii. 18.* and he did not seek in vain.

2. Orders given to the angel Gabriel to inform him concerning this vision. One *in the appearance of a man*, who, some think, was Christ himself, for who but he could command angels? He orders Gabriel to *make Daniel understand this vision*. Sometimes God is pleased to make use of the ministration of angels, not only to protect his children, but to instruct them; to serve the kind intentions not only of his providence, but of his grace.

3. The consternation that Daniel was in upon the approach of his instructor, *ver. 17. when he came near, I was afraid*. Tho' Daniel was a man of great prudence and courage, and had been conversant with the visions of the Almighty, yet the approach of an extraordinary messenger from heaven put him into this fright. He *fell upon his face*, not to worship the angel, but because he could no longer bear the dazzling lustre of his glory. Nay, being prostrate upon the ground, he *fell into a dead sleep*, *ver. 18.* which came not from any neglect of the vision, or indifferency towards it, but was in effect of his faintness, and the oppression of spirit he was under, through the abundance of revelations. The disciples in the garden *slept for*

sorrow: and as there, so here the *spirit* was *willing*, but the *flesh* was *weak*. Daniel would have kept awake and could not.

4. The relief which the angel gave to Daniel, with great encouragement to him to expect a satisfactory discovery of the meaning of this vision. (1.) He *touched him*, and *set him upon his feet*, *ver. 18.* Thus when John in a like case was in a like consternation, Christ *laid his right hand upon him*, Rev. i. 17. It was a gentle touch that the angel here gave to Daniel, to shew that he came not to hurt him, not to *plead against him with his great power*, or with a hand *heavy upon him*, but to help him, to *put strength into him*, Job xxiii. 6. which God can do with a touch. When we are slumbering and grovelling on this earth, we are very unfit to hear from God, and to converse with him. But if God design instruction for us, he will by his grace awaken us out of our slumber, raise us from things below, and *set us upright*. (2.) He promised to inform him. *Understand, O son of man*, *ver. 17. i. e.* Thou shalt understand, if thou wilt but apply thy mind to understand. He calls him *son of man*, to intimate, that he would consider his frame, and would deal tenderly with him, accommodating himself to his capacity, as a man. Or, thus he preaches humility to him; tho' he be admitted to converse with angels, he must not be puffed up with it, but must remember that he is a *son of man*. Or, perhaps this title puts an honour upon him: the Messiah was lately called the *son of man*, chap. vii. 13. and Daniel is an to him, is a figure of him as a prophet, and one *greatly beloved*. He assures him, that he shall be made to know *what shall be in the last end of the indignation*, *ver. 19.* Let it be laid up for a comfort to those who shall live to see these calamitous times, that there shall be an end of them, *the indignation shall cease*, Isa. x. 25. *it shall be overpast*, Isa. xxvi. 20. It may intermit and return again, but the *last end* shall be glorious; good will *follow it*, nay, and good will be *brought out of it*. He tells him, *ver. 17. At the time of the end shall be the vision*, i. e. When that *last end* of the indignation comes, when the course of this providence is compleated, then the vision shall be made plain and intelligible by the event, as the event shall be made plain and intelligible by the vision. Or, *at the time of the end* of the Jewish church, in the latter days of it *shall this vision* be accomplished three or four hundred years hence; understand it therefore, that thou mayest leave it on record for the generations to come. But if he ask more particularly when is the time of the end? And how long to it? Let this answer suffice, *ver. 19. at the time appointed the end shall be*; it is fixed in the divine counsels, which cannot be altered, and which must not be *pryed into*.

5. The exposition which he gave him of the vision.

1. Concerning the two monarchies of Persia and Greece, *ver. 20, 21, 22.* The *ram* signified the succession of the kings of Media and Persia: the *rough goat* signified the kings of Greece; the *great horn* was Alexander, the *four horns* that rose in his room, were the four kingdoms into which his conquests were cantoned, of which before, *ver. 8.* They are said to *stand up out of the nations*, but *not in his power*; none of them ever made the figure that Alexander did. Josephus relates, that when Alexander had taken Tyre, and subdued Palestine, and was upon his march to Jerusalem, Jaddas, who was then high-priest, (who is named *Neb. xii. 11.*) fearing his rage, had recourse to God by prayer and sacrifice for the common safety, and was by him warned in a dream, that upon Alexander's approach he should throw open the gates of the city, and that he and the rest of the priests should go forth to meet him in their habits, and all the people in white; Alexander seeing this company at a distance went himself alone to the high-priest, and having prostrated himself before that God, whose name was engraven in the golden plate of his mitre, he first saluted him; and being asked by one of his own captains why he did so, he said, that while he was yet in Macedon musing of the conquest of Asia, there appeared to him a man like unto this, and thus attired, who invited him into Asia, and assured him of success in the conquest of it. The priests led him to the temple, where he offered sacrifice to the God of Israel as they directed him: and there they shewed him this book of the prophet Daniel, that it was there foretold, that a Grecian should come and destroy the Persians, which animated him very much in the expedition he was now meditating against Darius. Hereupon he took the Jews and their religion under his protection, promised to be kind to those of their religion in Babylon and Media, whither he was now marching: and, in honour of him, all the priests that had sons born that year, called them Alexander. *Joseph. l. 11.*

2. Concerning Antiochus and his oppression of the Jews. This is said to be in the *latter time of the kingdom of the Greeks*, *when the transgressors are come to the full*, *ver. 23. i. e.* when the degenerate Jews have filled up the measure of their iniquity, and are ripe for this destruction, so that God cannot in honour bear with them any longer, then shall *stand up* this king, to be *flagellum Dei*, the rod in God's hand, for the chastising of the Jews. Now observe here,

1. His character. He shall be a *king of fierce countenance*, insolent and furious, neither fearing God, nor regarding man; *understanding dark sentences*, or rather *versed in dark practices*, the

the *hidden things of dishonesty*; he was master of all the arts of diffimulation and deceit, and knew the *depths of Satan* as well as any man. He was *wise to do evil*.

2. His success: he shall make dreadful havock of the nations about him; *his power shall be mighty*, bear down all before it, but not by *his own power*, ver. 24. but partly by the assistance of his allies, Eumenes and Attalus, partly by the baseness and treachery of many of the Jews, even of the priests that came into his interests, and especially by the divine permission; it was not by his own power, but by a power given him from above, that he *destroyed wonderfully*, and thought he made himself a great man, by being a great destroyer. He *destroys wonderfully* indeed, for he destroys, (1.) The *mighty people* and they cannot resist him by their power. The princes of Egypt cannot stand before him with all their forces, but he *practiseth* against them, and *prospereth*. Note, The mighty ones of the earth commonly meet with those at length that are too hard for them, that are more mighty than they. Let not the strong man then glory in his strength, be it never so great, unless he could be sure there were none stronger than he. (2.) He destroys the *holy people*, or, *the people of the holy ones*, and their sacred character doth neither deter him from destroying them, nor defend them from being destroyed. *All things come alike to all*, and there is *one event* to the *mighty*, and to the *holy* in this world.

3. The methods by which he will gain this success; not by true courage, wisdom, or justice, but by his *policy* and *craft*, ver. 25. by fraud and deceit, and serpentine subtilty; he shall *cause craft to prosper*; so cunningly shall he carry on his projects, that he shall gain his point by the art of wheedling. By *peace* he shall destroy many, as others do by war; under the umbrage of treaties, leagues, and alliances with them he shall encroach on their rights, and trick them into a subjection to him. Thus sometimes what a nation truly *brave* has gained in a *righteous* war, a nation truly *base* has regained in a *treacherous* peace, and *craft* has been caused to prosper.

4. The mischief that he shall do to religion. He shall *magnify himself in his heart*, and think himself fit to prescribe, and give law to every body, so that he shall *stand up against the Prince of princes*, i. e. against God himself; he will profane his temple and altar, prohibit his worship, and prosecute his worshippers. See what a height of impudence some mens impiety brings them to; they openly bid defiance to God himself, tho' he is the King of kings.

5. The ruin that he shall be brought to at last. He shall be *broken without hand*, i. e. without the hand of man, he shall not be slain in war, nor shall he be assassinated as tyrants commonly were; but he shall fall into the hands of the living God, and die by an immediate stroke of his vengeance. He hearing that the Jews had cast the image of Jupiter Olympus out of the temple, where he had placed it, was so enraged at the Jews, that he vowed he would make Jerusalem a *common burying-place*; and determined to march thither immediately: but no sooner had he spoken these proud words, but he was struck with an incurable plague in his bowels, worms bred so fast in his body, that whole flakes of flesh sometimes dropped from him, his torments were violent, and the stench of his disease such, that none could endure to come near him. He continued in this misery very long; at first he persisted in his menaces against the Jews, but at length despairing of his recovery, he called his friends together and acknowledged all those miseries to have fallen upon him for the injuries he had done to the Jews, and his profaning the temple at Jerusalem; then he wrote courteous letters to the Jews, and vowed, That if he recovered he would let them have the free exercise of their religion. But finding his disease grow upon him, when he could no longer endure his own smell, he said, *It is meet to submit to God, and for man which is mortal not to set himself in competition with God*; and so died miserably in a strange land, on the mountains of Pacata near Babylon. So Usher's Annals, A. M. 3840. about one hundred and sixty years before the birth of Christ.

3. As to the time fixed for the continuance of the cessation of the daily sacrifice, it is not explained here, but only confirmed, ver. 26. That *vision of the evening and morning is true*, in the proper sense of the words, and needs no explication. How unlikely soever it might be that God should suffer his own sanctuary to be thus profaned, yet it is true, it is too true, so it shall be.

Lastly, Here is the conclusion of this vision, and here,

1. The charge given to Daniel to keep it private for the present. *Shut thou up the vision*; let it not be publicly known among the Chaldeans, lest the Persians, who were now shortly to possess the kingdom, should be incensed against the Jews by it, because the downfall of their kingdom was foretold by it, which would be unreasonable, now the edict for their release was expected from the king of Persia. *Shut it up, for it shall be for many days*; it was about three hundred years from the time of this vision, to the time of the accomplishment of it, therefore he must *shut it up* for the present, even from the people of the Jews, lest it should amaze and perplex them, but let it be kept safe for the generations to come, that should live

about the time of the accomplishment of it, for to them it would be both most intelligible, and most serviceable. Note, What we know of the things of God should be carefully *laid up*, that hereafter when there is occasion it may be *faithfully laid out*; and what we have not now any use for, yet we may have another time; divine truths should be sealed up among our treasures, that we may *find them again after many days*.

2. The care he took to keep it private, having received such a charge, ver. 27. He *fainted and was sick*, with the multitude of his thoughts within him occasioned by this vision, which oppressed and overwhelmed him the more because he was forbidden to publish what he had seen, so that *his belly was as wine which has no vent*, he was ready to burst like new bottles, Job xxxii. 19. However, he kept it to himself, stifled and smothered the concern he was in; so that those he conversed with could not perceive it, but he *did the king's business* according to the duty of his place, whatever it was. Note, As long as we live in this world we must have something to do in it; and those whom God has most dignified with his favours, yet must not think themselves *above their business*. Nor must the pleasure of communion with God take us off from the duties of our *particular callings*, but still we must in them *abide with God*. Those especially that are intrusted with *publick business*, must see to it, that they conscientiously discharge their trust.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have, 1. Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews, who were in captivity; in which he confesseth sin, acknowledgeth the justice of God in their calamities, but pleads God's promises of mercy which he had yet in store for them, ver. 1—19. (2.) An immediate answer sent him by an angel to his prayer; in which (1.) He is assured of the discharge of the Jews out of their captivity presently, ver. 20—23. and is informed concerning the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, of which that was a type, what should be the nature of it, and when it should be accomplished, ver. 24—27. And it is the clearest, brightest prophecy of the Messiah, in all the Old Testament.

1. **I**N the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; 2. In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And I set my face unto the Lord GOD, to seek by prayer, and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.

We left Daniel in the close of the foregoing chapter employed in the *king's business*, but here we have him employed in *better business* than any the king had for him, speaking to God, and hearing from him, not for himself only but for the church, whose mouth he was to God, and for whose use the oracles of God were committed to him, relating to the days of the Messiah. Observe,

1. When it was that Daniel had this communion with God, ver. 1. In the first year of Darius the Mede, who was newly made king of the Chaldeans, Babylon being conquered by him and his nephew, or grand-son, Cyrus. In this year, the seventy years of the Jews captivity ended, but the decree for their release was not yet issued out; so that this address of Daniel's to God seems to have been ready in that year, and probably before he was cast into the lions den. And one powerful inducement perhaps it was to him then to stick so close to the duty of prayer, tho' it cost him his life, that he had so lately experienced the benefit and comfort of it.

2. What occasioned his address to God by prayer, ver. 2. He *understood by books*, that seventy years was the time fixed for the continuance of the desolations of Jerusalem, ver. 2. The book by which he understood this was the book of the prophecies of Jeremiah, in which he found it expressly foretold, Jer. xxix. 10. *after seventy years be accomplished in Babylon*, (and therefore they must be reckoned from the first captivity, in the third year of Jehoiakim, which Daniel had reason to remember by a good token, for it was in that captivity that he was carried away himself, chap. i. 1.) *I will visit you and perform my good word towards you*. It was likewise said, Jer. xxv. 3. *This whole land shall be seventy years a desolation* (Chorbath) the same word that Daniel here useth for the desolations of Jerusalem, which shews he had that prophecy before him when he wrote this. Though Daniel was himself a great prophet, and one that was well acquainted with

with the visions of God, yet he was a diligent student in the scripture, and thought it no disparagement to him to consult Jeremiah's prophecies. He was a great politician, and prime minister of state to one of the greatest monarchs upon earth, and yet could find both heart and time to converse with the word of God. The greatest and best men in the world must not think themselves *above their bibles*.

3. How serious and solemn his address to God was, when he understood that the seventy years were just upon expiring, (for it appears by Ezekiel's dating of his prophecies, that they exactly computed the years of their captivity) then he *set his face to seek God by prayer*. Note, God's promises are intended not to supersede but to excite and encourage our prayers; and when we see the day of the performance of them approaching we should the more earnestly plead them with God, and put them in suit. So Daniel did here; he prayed three times a day, and, no doubt, in every prayer made mention of the desolations of Jerusalem; yet he did not think that enough, but even in the midst of his business, set time apart for an extraordinary application to heaven on Jerusalem's behalf. God had said to Ezekiel, that though Daniel, among others, stood before him, his intercession should not prevail to prevent the judgment, *Ezek. xiv. 14.* yet he hopes now *the warfare is accomplished*, (*Isa. xl. 2.*) his prayer may be heard for the removing of the judgment. When the day of deliverance dawns it is time for God's praying people to bestir themselves; something extraordinary is then expected and required from them, besides their daily sacrifice. Now Daniel sought by prayer and supplications, for fear, lest the sins of the people should provoke him to defer their deliverance longer than was intended; or rather, that the people might be prepared by the grace of God for the deliverance, now the providence of God was about to work it out for them. Now observe, (1.) The intenseness of his mind in this prayer. *I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek him*: which notes the fixedness of his thoughts, the firmness of his faith, and the fervour of his devout affections in the duty. We must in prayer set God before us, and set ourselves as in his presence; to him we must *direct our prayer*, and must *look up*. Probably in token of his setting his face towards God he did, as usual, set his face towards Jerusalem, to affect his own heart the more with the desolations of it. (2.) The mortification of his body in this prayer; in token of his deep humiliation before God, for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and the sense he had of his unworthiness, when he prayed he *fasted*, put on *sackcloth*, and lay in *ashes*, the more to affect himself with the desolations of Jerusalem, which he was praying for the repair of, and to make himself sensible that he was now about an extraordinary work.

4. And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant, and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments: 5. We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. 6. Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7. O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day: to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel that are near, and that are far off, through all the countreys whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. 8. O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. 9. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him. 10. Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets. 11. Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice, therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him. 12. And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done, as hath been done upon Jerusalem. 13. As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand

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thy truth. 14. Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doth: for we obeyed not his voice. 15. And now O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt, with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown as at this day: we have sinned, we have done wickedly. 16. ¶ O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. 17. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lords sake. 18. O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. 19. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city, and thy people are called by thy name.

We have here Daniel's prayer to God, as *his God*, and the *confession* which he joined with that prayer; *I prayed and made my confession*. Note, In every prayer we must make confession, not only of the sins we have been guilty of (which we commonly call *confession*) but of our faith in God, and dependence upon him; our sorrow for sin, and our resolutions against it. It must be *our confession*, must be the language of our own convictions; and that which we ourselves do heartily subscribe to.

Let us go over the several parts of this prayer, which we have reason to think he offered up much larger than is here recorded; and that these are only the heads of it.

1. Here is his humble, serious, reverent address to God. In which he gives glory to God, (1.) As a God to be feared; and whom it is our duty always to stand in awe of; *O Lord, the great and dreadful God*, that art able to deal with the greatest and most terrible of the church's enemies. (2.) As a God to be trusted, and whom it is our duty to depend upon, and put a confidence in; *keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him*, and as a proof of their love to him *keep his commandments*. If we do our part of the bargain, he will not fail to do his. He will be to his people *as good as his word*, for he *keeps covenant* with them, and not one *iota* of his promise shall fall to the ground; nay, he will be *better than his word*, for he *keeps mercy to them* something more than was in the covenant. It was proper for Daniel to have his eye upon God's *mercy*, now he was to lay before him the miseries of his people; and upon God's *covenant* now he was to sue for the performance of a promise. Note, We should in prayer look both at God's greatness and his goodness, his majesty and mercy in conjunction.

2. Here is a penitent confession of sin, the procuring cause of all the calamities which his people had for so many years been groaning under, *ver. 5, 6.* when we seek to God for national mercies, we ought to humble our selves before him for national sins; these are the sins Daniel here laments: and it is observable, what variety of words he makes use of to set forth the greatness of their provocations; for it becomes penitents to lay load upon themselves; *we have sinned* in many particular instances, nay, *we have committed iniquity*, we have driven a trade of sin, *we have done wickedly* with a hard heart, and a stiff neck, and herein we have *rebelled*, have taken up arms against the King of kings, his crown and dignity. Two things aggravated their sins.

(1.) That they had violated the express laws God had given them by Moses; we have *departed from thy precepts and from thy judgments*, and have not conformed to them. And, *ver. 10.* *we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God*. That which speaks the nature of sin, that it is *the transgression of the law*, doth sufficiently speak the malignity of it; if sin be made to appear *sin*, it cannot be made to appear worse; its *sinfulness* is its greatest *hatefulness*, *Rom. vii. 13.* God has *set his laws before us* plainly and fully as the copy we should write after, yet *we have not walked in them*, but turned aside, or turned back.

(2.) That they had slighted the *fair warnings* God had given them by the prophets, which in every age he had sent to them, *rising up betimes and sending them*, *ver. 6.* *We have not hearkened to thy servants the prophets*, who have put us in mind of thy laws, and of the sanctions of them; though they *spake in thy name*, we have not regarded them; though they delivered their message faithfully, with an universal respect to all orders and degrees of men, to *our kings and princes*, whom they had the courage and confidence to speak to, to *our fathers*, and to all the *people of the land*, whom they had the condescension and com-

passion to speak to ; yet *we have not hearkened to them*, not heard them, or not heeded them, or not complied with them ; *mocking God's messengers*, and *despising his words*, was Jerusalem's measure-filling sin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. This confession of sin is repeated here, and much insisted on ; penitents should again and again accuse and reproach themselves till they find their hearts thoroughly broken. *All Israel have transgressed thy law*, ver. 11. It is Israel, God's *professing* people, that have known better, and from whom better is expected : Israel, God's peculiar people, whom he has surrounded with his favours ; not here and there one, but it is all Israel, the generality of them, the body of the people that *has transgressed*, by departing, and getting out of the way, that they might not hear, and so might not obey thy voice. This disobedience is that which all true penitents do most sensibly charge upon themselves, ver. 14. *we obeyed not his voice*, and ver. 15. *we have sinned, we have done wickedly*. Those that would find mercy must thus confess their sins.

3. Here is a self-abasing acknowledgment of the righteousness of God in all the judgments that were brought upon them : and it is evermore the way of true penitents thus to justify God, that he may be clear when he judgeth, and the sinner may bear all the blame.

(1.) He acknowledgeth that it was sin that plunged them in all these troubles. Israel is *dispersed* through all the countries about, and so weakened, impoverished, and exposed ; God's hand has *driven them* hither and thither, some near where they are known, and therefore the more ashamed ; others *afar off*, where they are not known, and therefore the more abandoned, and it is *because of their trespasss that they have trespassed*, ver. 7. they mingled themselves with the nations, that they might be *debauched* by them, and now God mingles them with the nations that they might be *stripped* by them.

(2.) He owns the righteousness of God in it ; that he had done them no wrong in all he had brought upon them, but had dealt with them as they deserved, ver. 7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee*, we have no fault to find with thy providence, no exceptions to make against thy judgments ; for, ver. 14. *The Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doth*, even in these fore calamities we are now under, for *we obeyed not the words of his mouth*, and therefore justly feel the weight of his hand. This seems to be borrowed from Lam. i. 18.

(3.) He takes notice of the fulfilling of the scripture in what was brought upon them ; *in very faithfulness he afflicted them* ; for it was according to the word which he had spoken. *The curse is poured upon us and the oath*, i. e. the curse that was ratified by an oath in the law of Moses, ver. 11. This further justifies God in their trouble, That he did but inflict the penalty of the law, and which he had given them fair notice of. It was necessary for the preserving of the honour of God's veracity, and saving his government from contempt, that the threatnings of his word should be accomplished, otherwise they look but as bugbears, nay, they seem not at all frightful. Therefore *he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us*, because we broke his laws, and *against our judges that judged us*, because they did not, according to the duty of their place, punish the breach of God's laws : he told them many a time, that if they did not execute justice, as terrors to evil-workers, he must and would take the work into his own hands : and now he has *confirmed* what he said, *by bringing upon us a great evil*, in which the princes and judges themselves deeply shared. Note, It contributes very much to our profiting by the judgments of God's hand, to observe how exactly they agree, with the judgments of his mouth.

(4.) He aggravates the calamities they were in, lest they should seem, having been long used to them, to make light of them, and so to lose the benefit of the chastening of the Lord by despising it. It is not some of the common troubles of life that we are complaining of, but that which has in it some special marks of divine displeasure ; for *under the whole heaven has not been done, as hath been done upon Jerusalem*, ver. 12. It is Jeremiah's lamentation in the name of the church, *Was ever sorrow like unto my sorrow ?* which must suppose another like question, *Was ever sin like unto my sin ?*

(5.) He puts shame upon the whole nation, from the highest to the lowest, and if they will say *amen* to his prayer, as it was fit they should, if they would come in for a share in the benefit of it, they must all put their hand upon their mouth, and their mouth in the dust, *to us belongs confusion of faces as at this day*, ver. 7. we lie under the shame of the punishment *at this day*, and we ought to accommodate our selves to it, and to accept of the punishment of our iniquity, for shame is our due. If Israel had retained their character, and had continued a *holy people*, they had been *high above all nations in praise, and name, and honour*, Deut. xxvi. 19. But now they have *sinned and done wickedly*, confusion and disgrace belongs to them, *to the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem*, the inhabitants both of the country, and the city, for they have been all alike guilty before God ; it belongs to *all Israel*, both to the two tribes that are near by the rivers of Babylon, and to the ten tribes, that are afar off in the land of Assyria. Confusion belongs not only to the common people of our land, but to *our kings, our princes, and our fathers*, ver. 8. who should have set a better example, and have used

their authority and influence for the checking of the threatening torrent of vice and profaneness.

(6.) He imputes the continuance of the judgment to their incorrigibleness under it, ver. 13, 14. *All this evil is come upon us*, and has lain long upon us, yet *made we not our prayer before the Lord our God*, not in a right manner, as we should have made it ; *with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart* ; we have been smitten, but have not returned to him that smote us ; *we have not intreated the face of the Lord our God*, so the word is ; we have taken no care to make our peace with God, and reconcile our selves to him : Daniel set his brethren a good example of praying continually, but he was sorry to see how few there were that followed his example ; in their affliction it was expected they would *seek God early*, but they sought him not ; that they might *turn from their iniquities*, and *understand his truth*. The errand upon which afflictions are sent, is to bring men to *turn from their iniquities*, and to *understand God's truth* ; so Elihu had explained them, Job xxxiv. 10. God by them *opens mens ears to discipline*, and *commandeth that they return from iniquity*. And if men were brought rightly to *understand God's truth*, and to submit to the power and authority of it, they would turn from the error of their ways. Now the first step towards this is, to *make our prayer before the Lord our God*, that the affliction may be sanctified before it is removed, and that the grace of God may go along with the providence of God to make it answer the end. Those that in their affliction *make not their prayer to God*, that *cry not when he bindeth them*, are not likely to *turn from iniquity*, or to *understand his truth*. Therefore, because we have not improved the affliction, *the Lord hath watched upon the evil*, as the judge takes care that execution be done according to the sentence ; because we have not been melted, he hath kept us still in the furnace, and *watched over it*, to make the heat yet more intense, for when God judgeth he will overcome ; and will be justified in all his proceedings.

4. Here is a believing appeal to the mercy of God, and to the ancient tokens of his favour to Israel, and the concern of his own glory in their interests.

1. It is some comfort to them, (and not a little) that God has been always ready to pardon sin, ver. 9. *To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses* ; this refers to that proclamation of his name, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *The Lord God gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity*. Note, It is very encouraging to poor sinners that *mercies belong to God*, as it is convincing and humbling to them that righteousness belongs to him ; and they who give him the glory of his righteousness may take to themselves the comfort of his mercies, Psal. lxii. 12. There are abundant *mercies* in God, and not only *forgiveness* but *forgivenesses* ; he is a *God of pardons*, Neh. ix. 17. he *multiplies to pardon*. Isa. lv. 7. *Tho' we have rebelled against him*, yet with him there is mercy, pardoning mercy, even for the rebellious.

2. It is likewise a support to them to think that God had formerly glorified himself by delivering them out of Egypt ; so far he looks back for the encouragement of his faith, ver. 15. *Thou hast formerly brought thy people out of Egypt, with a mighty hand*, and wilt thou not now with the same mighty hand bring them out of Babylon ? Were they then *formed* into a people ? And shall they not now be *reformed* and *new formed* ? Are they now sinful and unworthy ? And were they not so then ? Are their oppressors now *mighty* and *haughty* ? And were they not so then ? And hath not God said, that their deliverance out of Babylon shall out-shine even that out of Egypt ? Jer. xvi. 14. The force of this plea lies in that, *thou hast gotten the renown, hast made thee a name*, so the word is, *as at this day*, i. e. even to this day, by bringing us out of Egypt, and wilt thou lose the credit of that by letting us perish in Babylon ? Didst thou get a renown by that deliverance we have so oft commemorated, and wilt thou not now get thee a renown by this which we have so often prayed for, and so long waited for ?

5. Here is a pathetic complaint of the reproach that God's people lay under, and the ruins that God's sanctuary lay in, both which redounded very much to the dishonour of God, and the diminution of that name and renown which God had gained by bringing them out of Egypt.

1. God's *holy people* were despised ; by their sins and the iniquities of their fathers they had profaned their crown, and made themselves despicable, and then, tho' they are in name and profession God's people, and upon that account truly great and honourable, yet they are become a reproach to all that are round about them. Their neighbours laugh them to scorn, and triumph in their disgrace. Note, Sin is a reproach to any people, but especially to God's people, that have more eyes upon them, and have more honour to lose than other people.

2. God's *holy place* was desolate. Jerusalem the holy city was a reproach, ver. 16. when it lay in ruins it was an *astonishment* and a *hissing* to all that passed by. The sanctuary, the holy house was desolate, ver. 17. The altars demolished, and all the buildings laid in ashes. Note, The desolations of the sanctuary are the grief of all the saints, who reckon all their comforts in this world buried in the ruins of the sanctuary.

6. Here is an importunate request to God for the restoring of the poor captive-Jews to their former enjoyments again. The petition is very pressing, for God gives us leave in prayer to wrestle with

with him, *O Lord, I beseech thee*, ver. 16. If ever thou wilt do any thing for me, do this; it is my heart's desire and prayer, now therefore, *O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplication*, ver. 17. and grant an answer of peace to it. Now what are his petitions, what are his requests?

(1.) That God would turn away his wrath from them; that is it which all the saints dread and deprecate more than any thing; *O let thine anger be turned away from thy Jerusalem thy holy mountain*, ver. 16. He doth not pray for the turning again of their captivity, let the Lord do with them as seemeth good in his eyes; but they pray first for the turning away of God's wrath: Take away the cause and the effect will cease.

(2.) That he would lift up the light of his countenance upon them, ver. 17. *cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate*, i. e. return in mercy to us, and shew that thou art reconciled to us, and then all shall be well. Note, The shining of God's face upon the desolations of the sanctuary, is all in all towards the repair of it; and upon that foundation it must be rebuilt. If therefore its friends would begin their work at the right end, they must first be earnest with God in prayer for his favour, and recommend his desolate sanctuary to his smiles; *cause thy face to shine*, and then *we shall be saved*, Psal. lxxx. 3.

(3.) That he would forgive their sins, and then hasten their deliverance, ver. 19. *O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive*. That the mercy prayed for may be granted in mercy, let the sin that threatens to come between us and it be removed; *O Lord, hearken and do*. Not hearken and *speak* only, but hearken and *do*; do that for us which none else can; and that speedily, *defer not, O my God*. Now he sees the appointed day approaching, he could in faith pray that God would make haste to them and not defer. David often prays, *make haste, O God, to help me*.

7. Here are several pleas and arguments to enforce the petitions; God gives us leave not only to pray but to plead with him; which is not to move him, he himself knows what he will do; but to move ourselves, to excite our fervency, and encourage our faith.

1. They disdain a dependence upon any righteousness of their own; they pretend not to merit any thing at God's hand but wrath and the curse, ver. 18. *we do not present our supplications before thee*, with hope to speed for our righteousnesses, as if we were worthy to receive thy favour for any good in us, or done by us, or could demand any thing as a debt; we cannot insist upon our own justification, no, tho' we were more righteous than we are; nay, tho' we knew nothing amiss by ourselves, yet are we not thereby justified, nor would we answer, but we would make supplication to our judge. Moses had told Israel long before, that whatever God did for them, it was not for their righteousness, Deut. iv. 4, 5. And Ezekiel had of late told them, that their return out of Babylon would be not for their sakes, Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32. Note, Whenever we come to God for mercy, we must lay aside all conceit of, and confidence in, our own righteousness.

2. They take their encouragement in prayer from God only; as knowing that his reasons of mercy are fetched from within himself, and therefore from him we must borrow all our pleas for mercy; and so give honour to him when we are suing for grace and mercy from him.

1. Do it for thine own sake, ver. 19. for the accomplishment of thine own counsel, the performance of thine own promise, and the manifestation of thine own glory. Note, God will do his own work, not only in his own way and time, but for his own sake, and so we must take it.

2. Do it for the Lord's sake, i. e. for the Lord Christ's sake; for the sake of the Messiah promised, who is the Lord; so the most and best of our Christian interpreters understand it. For the sake of Adonai, so David called the Messiah, Psal. cx. 1. and mercy is prayed for, for the church, for the sake of the Son of man, Psal. lxxx. 17. and for thy word's sake, 2 Sam. vii. 21. Note, Christ is the Lord, he is Lord of all. It is for his sake that God causeth his face to shine upon sinners when they repent and turn to him; because of the satisfaction he has made: In all our prayers, that therefore must be our plea, we must make mention of his righteousness, even of his only, Psal. lxxi. 16. Look upon the face of the anointed. He has himself directed us to ask in his name.

3. Do it according to all thy righteousness, ver. 16. i. e. plead for us against our persecutors and oppressors, according to thy righteousness. Tho' we are ourselves unrighteous before God, yet with reference to them we have a righteous cause, which we leave it with the righteous God to appear in the defence of. Or rather by the righteousness of God here is meant his faithfulness to his promise. God had according to his righteousness, executed the threatening, ver. 11. Now, Lord, wilt thou not do according to all thy righteousness? Wilt thou not be as true to thy promises, as thou hast been to thy threatnings, and accomplish them also.

4. Do it for thy great mercies, ver. 18. to make it to appear that thou art a merciful God. The good things we ask of God we call mercies, because we expect them purely from God's mercy. And because misery is the proper object of mercy, the prophet here spreads the deplorable condition of the church before God, as it were to move his compassion; open thine eyes and behold our desolations, especially the desolations of the sanctuary. O look with pity upon a piteous case. Note, The desolations of the church must in prayer be laid before God, and then left with him.

5. Do it for the sake of the relation we stand in to them. The sanctuary that is desolate is thy sanctuary, ver. 17. dedicated to thine honour, employed in thy service, and the place of thy residence; Jerusalem is thy city, and thy holy mountain, ver. 10. it is the city which is called by thy name, ver. 18. it was the city which God had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there: The people that are become a reproach are thy people, and thy name suffers in the reproach cast upon them, ver. 16. they are called by thy name, ver. 19. Lord, thou hast a propriety in them, and therefore art interested in their interests; wilt thou not provide for thine own, for those of thine own house? They are thine, save them, Psal. cxix. 94.

20. ¶ And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God, for the holy mountain of my God: 21. Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy. 25. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the prince, shall be seven weeks; and threescore and two weeks the streets shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come, shall destroy the city, and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27. (And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

We have here the answer that was immediately sent to Daniel's prayer, and it is a very memorable one; as it contains the most illustrious prediction of Christ and gospel grace that is extant in all the Old Testament. If John Baptist was the morning-star, this was the day-break to the sun of righteousness; the day-spring from on high.

Here is, 1. The time when this answer was given.

(1.) It was while Daniel was at prayer. This he observed and laid a mighty emphasis upon. While I was speaking, ver. 20. yea while I was speaking in prayer, ver. 21. before he rose from his knees, and while there was yet more which he intended to say. He mentions the two heads he chiefly insisted upon in prayer, and which perhaps he designed yet further to enlarge upon. (1.) He was confessing sin, and lamenting that; both my sin, and the sin of my people Israel. Daniel was a very great and good man, and yet he finds sin of his own to confess before God, and is ready to confess it: For there is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sins not; nor that sins and repents not; St John puts himself into the number of those who deceive themselves, if they say they have no sin, and who therefore confess their sins, 1 John i. 8. Good men find it an ease to their consciences to pour out their complaints before the Lord against themselves; and that is confessing sin. He also confessed the sin of his people, and bewailed that. Those who are heartily concerned for the glory of God, and the welfare of the church, and the souls of men, will mourn for others sins as well as for their own. (2.) He was making supplication before the Lord his God, and presenting it to him as an intercessor for Israel; and in this prayer his concern was for the holy mountain of his God, mount Zion. The desolations of the sanctuary lay nearer his heart, than those of the city and the land; and the repair of that, and the setting up of the publick worship of the God of Israel again, was what he had in view in the deliverance he was preparing for, more than the re-establishment of their civil interests. Now while Daniel was thus employed, (1.) He had a grant made him of the mercy he prayed for. Note, God is very ready to hear prayer, and to give an answer of peace. Now was fulfilled what God had spoken, Isa. lxxv. 24. while they are yet speaking I will

will hear. Daniel grew very fervent in prayer, and his affections were very strong, *ver. 18, 19.* And while he was speaking with such fervour and ardency, the angel came to him with a gracious answer. God is well pleased with lively devotions. We cannot now expect that God should send us answers to our prayer by angels, but if we pray with fervency for that which God hath promised, we may by faith take the promise as an immediate answer to the prayer; for he is faithful that has promised. (2.) He had a discovery made him of a far greater, and more glorious redemption, which God would work out for his church in the latter days. Note, Those that would be brought acquainted with Christ and his grace must be much in prayer.

(2.) It was about the time of the evening oblation, *ver. 21.* The altar was in ruins, and there was no oblation offered upon it, but, it should seem, the pious Jews in their captivity were daily thoughtful of the time when it should have been offered, and at that hour, were ready to weep at the remembrance of it; and desired and hoped that their prayer should be set forth before God as incense, and the lifting up of their hands, and their hearts with their hands, should be acceptable in his sight as the evening-sacrifice, *Psal. cxli. 2.* The evening oblation was a type of the great sacrifice which Christ was to offer in the evening of the world, and it was in the virtue of that sacrifice that Daniel's prayer was accepted, when he prayed for the Lord's sake; and for the sake of that his glorious discovery of redeeming love was made to him; the Lamb opened the seals in the virtue of his own blood.

2. The messenger by whom this answer was sent. It was not given him in a dream, or by a voice from heaven, but for the greater certainty, and solemnity of it, an angel was sent on purpose, appearing in a human shape, to give this answer to Daniel. Observe,

1. Who this angel, or messenger, was; it was the man Gabriel; if Michael the archangel be, as many suppose, no other but Jesus Christ, this Gabriel is the only created angel that is named in scripture; Gabriel signifies, the mighty one of God; for the angels are great in power and might, *2 Pet. ii. 11.* It was he whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning: Daniel heard him called by his name, and thence learned it, *Dan. viii. 18.* and tho' then he trembled at his approach, yet he observed him so carefully that now he knew him again, knew him to be the same that he had seen at the beginning, and being somewhat better acquainted with him, was not now so terrified at the sight of him as he had been at first. When this angel said to Zecharias, *I am Gabriel,* *Luke i. 19.* he intended thereby to put him in mind of this notice which he had given to Daniel of the Messiah's coming, when it was at a distance, for the confirming of his faith in the notice he was then about to give of it, as at the door.

2. The instructions which this messenger received from the Father of lights to whom Daniel prayed, *ver. 23.* At the beginning of thy supplications, the word, the commandment, came forth from God. Notice was given to the angels in heaven of this counsel of God, which they were desirous to look into; and orders given to Gabriel to go immediately, and bring the notice of it to Daniel. By this it appears, it was not any thing Daniel said, that moved God, for the answer was given as he began to pray; but God was well pleased with his serious solemn address to the duty, and in token of that sent him this gracious message. Or perhaps it was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications that Cyrus's word or commandment went forth to restore, and to build Jerusalem, that going forth spoken of, *ver. 25.* The thing is done this very day; the proclamation of liberty to the Jews is signed this morning, just then when thou wast praying for it; and now at the close of this fast day, Daniel has notice of it; as at the close of the day of atonement, the jubilee trumpet sounded to proclaim liberty.

3. The haste he made to deliver his message. He was caused to fly swiftly, *ver. 21.* Angels are winged messengers, quick in their motions, and delay not to execute the orders they receive; they run and return like a flash of lightning, *Ezek. i. 14.* But it should seem sometimes they are more expeditious than at other times, and make a quicker dispatch; as here, the angel was caused to fly swiftly, i. e. he was ordered, and he was enabled to fly swiftly; angels do their work in obedience to divine command, and in dependence upon divine strength. Tho' they excel in wisdom, they fly swifter or slower as God directs; and tho' they excel in power, they fly but as God causeth them to fly. Angels themselves are to us what he makes them to be; they are his ministers and do his pleasure, *Psal. ciii. 21.*

4. The prefaces or introductions to his message.

(1.) He touched him, *ver. 21.* as before *chap. viii. 18.* not to awaken him out of sleep, as then, but to give him a hint to break off his prayer, and to attend to that which he has to say in answer to it. Note, In order to the keeping up of our communion with God, we must not only be forward to speak to God, but as forward to hear what he has to say to us; when we have prayed we must look up, must look after our prayers, must set our selves upon our watch tower.

(2.) He talked with him, *ver. 22.* talked familiarly with him, as one friend talks with another, that his terror might not make him afraid. He informed him on what errand he came, that he was sent from heaven on purpose with a kind message to him. I am

come to shew thee, *ver. 23.* to tell thee that which thou didst not know before; he had shewed him the troubles of the church under Antiochus, and the period of those troubles, *chap. viii. 19.* but now he has greater things to shew him; for he that is faithful in a little shall be intrusted with more. Nay, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding, *ver. 22.* not only to shew thee these things, but to make thee understand them.

(3.) He assures him he was a favourite of heaven, else he had not had this intelligence sent him; and he must take it for a favour. I am come to shew thee, for thou art greatly beloved. Thou art a man of great desires; acceptable to God, and whom he has a favour for. Note, Though God loves all his children, yet there are some that are more than the rest greatly beloved; Christ had one disciple that lay in his bosom; and that beloved disciple was he that was entrusted with the prophetic visions of the New Testament, as Daniel was with those of the Old. For what greater token can there be of God's favour to any man, than for the secrets of the Lord to be with him? Abraham is the friend of God, and therefore shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do? *Gen. xviii. 17.* Note, Those may reckon themselves greatly beloved of God to whom, and in whom, he reveals his Son. Some observe, That the title which this angel Gabriel gives to the Virgin Mary, was much the same with this he here gives to Daniel, as if he designed to put her in mind of it, Thou that art highly favoured; as Daniel, greatly beloved.

(4.) He demands his serious attention to the discovery he was now about to make him; therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision, *ver. 23.* This intimates that it was a thing well worthy of his regard, above any of the visions he had been before favoured with. Note, Those who would understand the things of God must consider them; must apply their minds to them, ponder upon them, and compare spiritual things with spiritual. The reason why we are so much in the dark concerning the revealed will of God, and mistake concerning it, is for want of consideration. This vision both requires and deserves consideration.

3. The message itself; delivered with great solemnity, received, no doubt, with great attention, and recorded with great exactness; but in it, as is usual in prophecies, there are things dark and hard to be understood. Daniel, that understood by the book of the prophet Jeremiah, the expiration of the seventy years of the captivity, is now honourably employed to make known to the church another more glorious release, which that was but a shadow of at the end of another seventy, not years but weeks of years. He prayed over that prophecy, and received this in answer to that prayer. He had prayed for his people, and the holy city, that they might be released, that it might be rebuilt, but God answers him above what he was able to ask or think; God not only grants but out-does the desires of them that fear him, *Psal. xxi. 4.*

1. The times here determined are somewhat hard to be understood. In general it is seventy weeks, i. e. seventy times seven years, which makes just four hundred and ninety years; i. e. the great affairs that are yet to come concerning the people of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem, will lie within the compass of these years. These years are thus described by weeks, (1.) In conformity to the prophetic style, which is, for the most part, abstruse, and out of the common road of speaking; that the things foretold might not lie too obvious. (2.) To put an honour upon the division of time into weeks, which is made purely by the sabbath-day, and to signify, that that should be perpetual. (3.) With reference to the seventy years of the captivity; as they had been so long kept out of the possession of their own land, so being now restored to it they should seven times as long be kept in the possession of it: So much more doth God delight in shewing mercy than in punishing. The land had enjoyed its sabbaths in a melancholy sense seventy years, *Lev. xxvi. 34.* But now the people of the Lord shall in a comfortable sense enjoy their sabbaths seven times seventy years, and in them seventy sabbatical years, which makes ten jubilees. Such proportions are there in the disposals of providence, that we might see and admire the wisdom of him who hath determined the times before appointed.

The difficulties that arise about these seventy weeks are,

1. Concerning the time when they commence, and whence they are to be reckoned. They are here dated from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, *ver. 25.* I should most incline to understand this of the edict of Cyrus, mentioned, *Ezra i. 1.* for by it the people were restored, and though express mention be not made there of the building of Jerusalem, yet that is supposed in the building of the temple, and was foretold to be done by Cyrus, *Isa. xlv. 28.* He shall say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built. That was both in prophecy and history the most famous decree for the building of Jerusalem; nay, it should seem this going forth of the commandment, (which may as well be meant of God's command concerning it, as of Cyrus's) is the same with that going forth of the commandment, mentioned, *ver. 23.* which was at the beginning of Daniel's supplications. And it looks very graceful that the seventy weeks should begin immediately upon the expiration of the seventy years. And there is nothing to be objected against this, but that by this reckoning, the Persian monarchy, from the taking of Babylon by Cyrus,

Cyrus, to Alexander's conquest of Darius, lasted but an hundred and thirty years, whereas by the particular account given of the reigns of the Persian emperors, it is computed that it continued two hundred and thirty years. So Thucydides, Xenophon, and others reckon. Those who fix it to that first edict, set aside these computations of the heathen historians, as uncertain and not to be relied upon. But others willing to reconcile them, begin the four hundred and ninety years not at the edict of Cyrus, *Ezra* i. 1. but at the second edict for the building of Jerusalem, issued out by Darius Nothus above one hundred years after, mentioned *Ezra* vi. Others in the seventh year of Artaxerxes Mnemon, who sent Ezra with a commission, *Ezra* vii. 8—12. The learned Mr Poole, in his Latin Synopsis, has a vast and most elaborate collection of what has been said, *pro* and *con*, concerning the different beginnings of these weeks, with which the learned may entertain themselves.

2. Concerning the period of them. And here likewise interpreters are not agreed: Some make them to end at the death of Christ; and think the express words of this famous prophecy will warrant us to conclude, that from this very hour when Gabriel spoke to Daniel, at the time of the evening oblation, to the hour when Christ died, which was towards evening too, was exactly four hundred and ninety years; and I am willing enough to be of that opinion. But others think because it is said, that *in the midst of the week*, i. e. the last of the seventy weeks, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, they end three years and a half after the death of Christ, when the Jews having rejected the gospel, the apostles turned to the Gentiles. But they who make them to end precisely at the death of Christ read it thus; he shall make strong the testament to the many, the last seven, or the last week, yea half that seven, or, half that week, (viz. the latter half, the three years and a half, which Christ spent in his publick ministry) shall bring to an end sacrifice and oblation. Others make these four hundred and ninety years to end with the destruction of Jerusalem, about thirty seven years after the death of Christ; because these seventy weeks are said to be determined upon the people of the Jews, and the holy city; and much is said here concerning the destruction of the city, and the sanctuary.

3. Concerning the division of them into seven weeks, and sixty two weeks, and one week, and the reason of this is as hard to account for as any thing else. In the first seven weeks, or forty nine years, the temple and city were built; and in the last single week Christ preached his gospel, by which the Jewish economy was taken down, and the foundations laid of the gospel city and temple, which were to be built upon the ruins of the former.

But whatever uncertainty we may labour under concerning the exact fixing of these times, there is enough clear and certain to answer the two great ends of determining them. (1.) It did serve then to raise and support the expectations of believers. There were general promises of the coming of the Messiah made to the patriarchs, the preceding prophets had often spoken of him, as one that should come, but never was the time fixed for his coming till now. And though there might be so much doubt concerning the date of this reckoning, that they could not ascertain the time just to a year, yet by the light of this prophecy they were directed about what time to expect him. And we find accordingly, that when Christ came, he was generally looked for; as the consolation of Israel, and redemption in Jerusalem by him, *Luke* ii. 25, 38. There were those that for this reason thought the kingdom of God should immediately appear, *Luke* xix. 11. and some think this was it that brought a more than ordinary concourse of people to Jerusalem, *Acts* ii. 5. (2.) It doth serve still to refute and silence the expectations of unbelievers, who will not own that Jesus is he who should come, but still look for another; this prediction silenced them, and will condemn them, for reckon these seventy weeks from which of the commandments to build Jerusalem we please, it is certain they are expired above fifteen hundred years ago, so that the Jews are for ever without excuse, who will not own, that the Messiah is come when they are gone so far beyond their utmost reckoning for his coming. But by this we are confirmed in our belief of the Messiah's being come, and that our Jesus is he, that he came just at the time prefixed, a time worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.

2. The events here foretold are more plain and easy to be understood, at least to us now. Observe what is here foretold, (1.) Concerning the return of the Jews, now speedily to their own land, and their settlement again there, which was the thing that Daniel now principally prayed for, and yet it is but briefly touched upon here in the answer to his prayer. Let this be a comfort to the pious Jews, that a commandment shall go forth to restore and to build Jerusalem, ver. 25. And the commandment shall not be in vain; for though the times will be very troublous, and this good work will meet with great opposition, yet it shall be carried on and brought to perfection at last; the street shall be built again, as spacious and splendid as ever it was; and the walls remain in troublous times. Note, As long as we are here in this world we must expect troublous times, upon some account or other; even then when we have joyous times, yet we must rejoice with trembling; it is but a gleam, it is but a lucid interval of peace and prosperity; the clouds will return after the rain, when the

Jews are restored in triumph to their own land, yet there they must expect troublous times, and prepare for them. But this is our comfort, that God will carry on his own work, will build up his Jerusalem, will beautify it, will fortify it even in troublous times: Nay, the troublousness of the times may, by the grace of God, contribute to the advancement of the church. The more it is afflicted, the more it multiplies.

(2.) Concerning the Messiah and his undertaking. The carnal Jews looked for a Messiah that should deliver them from the Roman yoke, and give them temporal power and wealth. Whereas they were here told, that the Messiah should come upon another errand, purely spiritual, and upon the account of which he should be the more welcome.

1. Christ came to take away sin, and to abolish that: Sin had made a quarrel between God and man, had alienated man from God, and provoked God against man; that was it that put dishonour upon God, and brought misery upon mankind, that was the great mischief-maker. He that would do God a real service, and man a real kindness, must be the destruction of that. Christ undertakes to be so, and for this purpose he is manifested, to destroy the works of the devil. He doth not say to finish your transgressions and your sins, but transgression and sin in general, for he is the propitiation not only for our sins that are Jews, but for the sins of the whole world. He came, (1.) To finish transgression; to restrain it, so some. To break the power of it, to bruise the head of that serpent that had done so much mischief; to take away the usurped dominion of that tyrant, and to set up a kingdom of holiness and love in the hearts of men, upon the ruins of Satan's kingdom there; that where sin and death had reigned, righteousness and life through grace might reign. When he died, he said, *It is finished*; sin has now had its death's wound given it; like Sampson's, *Let me die with the Philistines*; *Animamque in vulnere ponit*. (2.) To make an end of sin, to abolish it, that it may not rise up in judgment against us, to obtain the pardon of it, that it may not be our ruin. To seal up sins, so the margin reads it, that they may not appear, or break out against us, to accuse and condemn us. As when Christ cast the devil into the bottomless pit, he set a seal upon him, *Rev.* xx. 3. When sin is pardoned, it is sought for, and not found, as that which is sealed up. (3.) To make reconciliation for iniquity, as by a sacrifice, to satisfy the justice of God, and so to make peace, and bring God and man together; not only as an arbitrator or referee, who only brings the contending parties to a good understanding one of another, but as a surety or undertaker for us: He is not only the peace-maker, but the peace: He is the atonement.

2. He came to bring in an everlasting righteousness. God might justly have made an end of the sin, by making an end of the sinner; but Christ found out another way, and so made an end of sin as to save the sinner from it, by providing a righteousness for him. We are all guilty before God, and shall be condemned as guilty, if we have not a righteousness wherein to appear before him. Had we stood, our innocency would have been our righteousness, but being fallen, we must have something else to plead; and Christ has provided us a plea; the merit of his sacrifice is our righteousness; with this we answer all the demands of the law, *Christ has died, yea rather is risen again*: Thus Christ is the Lord our righteousness, for he is made of God to us righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. By faith we apply this to ourselves, and plead it with God, and our faith is imputed to us for righteousness, *Rom.* iv. 3, 5. This is an everlasting righteousness, for Christ who is our righteousness, and the prince of our peace, is the everlasting Father. It was from everlasting in the counsels of it, and will be to everlasting in the consequences of it. The application of it was from the beginning, for Christ was the lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and will be to the end, for he is able to save to the uttermost: It is of everlasting virtue, *Heb.* x. 11. it is the rock that follows us to Canaan.

3. He came to seal up the vision and prophecy, i. e. all the prophetic visions of the Old Testament, which had reference to the Messiah; he sealed them up, i. e. he accomplished them, answered them to a tittle, all things that were written in the law, the prophets, and the psalms concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in him; thus he confirmed the truth of them, as well as his own mission. He sealed them up, i. e. he put an end to that method of God's discovering his mind and will, and took another course by completing the scripture canon, in the New Testament, which is the more sure word of prophecy than that by vision, *2 Pet.* i. 19. *Heb.* i. 1.

4. He came to anoint the most holy, i. e. himself, the holy One, who was anointed, that is, appointed to his work, and qualified for it, by the Holy Ghost, that oil of gladness which he received without measure, above his fellows. Or, to anoint the gospel church, his spiritual temple or holy place, to sanctify and cleanse it, and appropriate it to himself, *Eph.* v. 26. Or, to consecrate for us a new and living way into the holiest, by his own blood, *Heb.* x. 20. as the sanctuary was anointed, *Exod.* xxx. 25, &c. He is called Messiah, ver. 25, 26. which signifies Christ. Anointed, *Joh.* i. 41. because he received the unction, both for himself, and for all that are his

5. In order to all this the Messiah must be *cut off*, must die a violent death, and so be cut off *from the land of the living*, as was foretold, *Isa. liii. 8.* Hence, when Paul preacheth the death of Christ, he saith he preached nothing but *what the prophets said should come*, *Acts xxvi. 22, 23.* And thus it behoved Christ to suffer. He must be cut off, but not for himself, not for any sin of his own, but as Caiaphas prophesied, he must die for the people in our stead, and for our good. Not for any advantage of his own; the glory he purchased for himself was no more but the glory he had before, *John xvii. 4, 5.* No, it was to atone for our sins, and to purchase life for us, that he was cut off.

6. He must confirm the covenant with many. He shall introduce a new covenant between God and man, a covenant of grace, since it was become impossible for us to be saved by a covenant of innocency: this covenant he shall confirm, by his doctrine and miracles, by his death and resurrection, by the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the seals of the New Testament, assuring us, That God is willing to accept of us upon gospel terms. His death made his testament of force, and enabled us to claim what is bequeathed by it. He confirmed it to the many, i. e. to the common people, the poor were evangelized, when the rulers and Pharisees believed not on him. Or he confirmed it with many, i. e. with the Gentile world; the New Testament was not (like the Old) confined to the Jewish church, but was committed to all nations; Christ gave his life a ransom for many.

7. He must cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease; by offering himself a sacrifice once for all, he shall put an end to all the Levitical sacrifices; shall supersede them, and set them aside; when the substance is come, the shadows shall be done away. He causeth all the peace-offerings to cease, when he has made peace by the blood of his cross, and by it confirmed the covenant of peace and reconciliation. By the preaching of his gospel to the world, which the apostles were intrusted to do, he took men off from expecting remission by the blood of bulls and goats, and so caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease; the apostle to the Hebrews shews what a better priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, we have now than they had under the law, as a reason why we should hold fast our profession.

(3.) Concerning the final destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Jewish church and nation; and this follows immediately upon the cutting off of the Messiah, not only because it was the just punishment of those that put him to death, which was the sin that filled up the measure of their iniquity, and brought ruin upon them, but because as things were, it was necessary to the perfecting of one of the great intentions of his death. He died to take away the ceremonial law, quite to abolish that law of commandments, and to vacate the obligation of it. But the Jews would not be persuaded to quit it, still they kept it up with more zeal than ever, they would hear no talk of parting with it, they stoned Stephen (the first Christian martyr) for saying, That Jesus should change the customs which Moses delivered them, *Acts vi. 14.* so that there was no way to abolish the Mosaick economy, but by destroying the temple, and the holy city, and the Levitical priesthood, and that whole nation which so incurably doted on them; this was effectually done in less than forty years after the death of Christ, and it was a desolation that could never be repaired to this day. And this is it which is here largely foretold, that the Jews who returned out of captivity, might not be overmuch lifted up with the rebuilding of their city and temple, because in process of time they would be finally destroyed, and not as now or seventy years only; but might rather rejoice in hope of the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in the world, which should never be destroyed. Now (1.) It is here foretold, That the people of the prince that shall come, shall be the instruments of this destruction, i. e. The Roman armies, belonging to a monarchy yet to come; Christ is the prince that shall come, and they are employed by him in this service; they are his armies, *Matth. xxii. 7.* Or, the Gentiles, who though now strangers, shall become the people of the Messiah, shall destroy the Jews. (2.) That the destruction shall be by war, and the end of that war should be this desolation determined. The wars of the Jews with the Romans, were by their own obstinacy made very long and very bloody, and they issued at length in the utter extirpation of that people. (3.) That the city and sanctuary should in a particular manner be destroyed, and laid quite waste. Titus the Roman general would fain have saved the temple, but his soldiers were so enraged against the Jews, that he could not restrain them from burning it to the ground, that this prophecy might be fulfilled. (4.) That all the resistance that should be made to this destruction should be in vain; the end of it shall be with a flood. It shall be a deluge of destruction, like that which swept away the old world, and which there will be no making head against. (5.) That hereby the sacrifice and oblation should be made to cease. And it must needs cease, when the family of the priests was so extirpated, and the genealogies of it so confounded, that (they say) there is no man in the world that can prove himself of the seed of Aaron. (6.) That there should be an overspreading of abominations, a general corruption of the Jewish nation, and an abounding of iniquity among them, for which it should be made desolate; *1. Thes. ii. 17.* Or it is rather to be understood of the armies

of the Romans, which were abominable to the Jews, they could not endure them, which overspread the nation, and by which it was made desolate. For these are the words which Christ refers to, *Mat. xxiv. 15.* When ye shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel, stand in the holy place, Then let them which be in Judea flee, which is explained, *Luke xxi. 20.* When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then flee. (7.) That the desolation should be total and final; He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, i. e. He shall make it completely desolate. It is a desolation determined, and it will be accomplished to the utmost. And when it was made desolate, it should seem there is something more determined that is to be poured upon the desolate, *ver. 27.* and what should that be but the spirit of slumber, *Rom. xi. 8, 25.* That blindness which is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, and then all Israel shall be saved.

CHAP. X.

This chapter and the two next (which conclude this book) make up one entire vision and prophecy, which was communicated to Daniel for the use of the church, not by signs and figures as before, chap. vii. and viii. but by express words; and this was about two years after the vision in the foregoing chapter; Daniel prayed daily, but had a vision only now and then. In this chapter we have some things introductory to the prophecy; in the eleventh chapter the particular predictions, and chap. xii. the conclusion of it. This chapter shews us, (1.) Daniel's solemn fasting and humiliation, before he had this vision, *ver. 1—3.* (2.) A glorious appearance of the Son of God to him, and the deep impression it made upon him, *ver. 4—9.* (3.) The encouragement that was given him to expect such a discovery of future events, as should be satisfactory and useful both to others and to himself; and that he should be enabled both to understand the meaning of this discovery, tho' difficult, and to bear up under the lustre of it, tho' dazzling and dreadful, *ver. 10—12.*

1. IN the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, (whose name was called Belteshazzar) and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long, and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision. 2. In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks. 3. I eat no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint my self at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. 4. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel: 5. Then I lift up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: 6. His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms, and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. 7. And I Daniel alone saw the vision, for the men that were with me saw not the vision: but a great quaking fell upon them, so they that fled to hide themselves. 8. Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. 9. Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

This vision is dated in the third year of Cyrus, i. e. of his reign, after the conquest of Babylon, his third year since Daniel became acquainted with him and a subject to him.

Here is, 1. A general idea of this prophecy, *ver. 1.* The thing was true; every word of God is so; it was true that Daniel had such a vision, and that such and such things were said, this he solemnly attests upon the word of a prophet; *Et hoc paratus est verificare*; and if it was a word spoken from heaven, no doubt it is steadfast, and may be depended upon. But the time appointed was long; as long as to the end of the reign of Antiochus, which was three hundred years, a long time indeed, when it is looked upon as to come. Nay, and because it is usual with the prophets to glance at things spiritual and eternal, there is that in this prophecy which looks in type as far forward as to the end of the world, and the resurrection of the dead; and then he might well say, The time appointed was long; but

but however it was made as plain to him, as if it had been a history rather than a prophecy; he *understood the thing*, so distinctly was it delivered to him, and did he receive it that he could say he *had understanding of the vision*: it did not so much operate upon his fancy, as upon his understanding.

2. An account of Daniel's mortification of himself before he had this vision; not in expectation of it, nor when he prayed that solemn prayer, *chap. ix.* doth it appear that he had any expectation of the vision in answer to it; but purely from a principle of devotion, and pious sympathy with the afflicted people of God. He *was mourning full three weeks*, ver. 2. for his own sins, and the sins of his people, and their sorrows. Some think the particular occasion of his mourning was the slothfulness and indifference of many of the Jews, who, tho' they had liberty to return to their own land, continued still in the land of their captivity, not knowing how to value the privileges offered them; and perhaps it troubled him the more, because they did so, justified themselves by the example of Daniel, tho' they had not that reason to *stay behind* which he had. Others think it was because he heard of the obstruction given to the building of the temple by the enemies of the Jews, who *hired counsellors against them to frustrate their purpose*, (Ezra iv. 4, 5.) *all the days of Cyrus*; and gained their point from his son Cambyfes, or Artaxerxes, who governed while Cyrus was absent in the Scythian war. Note, Good men cannot but mourn to see how slowly the work of God goes on in the world, and what opposition it meets with; how weak its friends are, and how active its enemies. During the days of Daniel's mourning he *eat no pleasant bread*; he could not live without meat, but he eat *little*, and very *sparingly*; and mortified himself in the *quality* as well as *quantity* of what he eat, which may truly be reckoned fasting, and a token of humiliation and sorrow. He did not *eat the pleasant bread* he used to eat, but that which was coarse and unpalatable, which he would not be tempted to eat any more of than was just necessary to support nature. As ornaments, so delicacies are very disagreeable to a day of humiliation. *Daniel eat no flesh, drunk no wine, nor anointed himself*, for these three weeks time, ver. 3. Tho' he was now a very *old man*, and might plead that the decay of his nature required what was nourishing; tho' he was a very great man, and might plead, that being used to dainty meats, he could not be without them, it would prejudice his health if he were, yet when it was both to testify and to assist his devotion, he could thus *deny himself*; be it noted to the shame of many young ordinary people who cannot *persuade themselves* thus to *deny themselves*.

3. A description of that glorious person whom Daniel saw in vision; which it is generally agreed could be no other but Christ himself, the eternal Word; he was by the side of the river Hiddekel, ver. 4. probably walking there, not for diversion, but devotion, and contemplation, as Isaac walked in the field to meditate; and being a person of distinction, he had his servants attending him at some distance. There he *looked up*, and saw *one man*, one alone, *a certain man*, even *the man Christ Jesus*; it must be he, for he appears in the same resemblance wherein he appeared to St John in the isle Patmos, *Rev. i. 13, 14, 15.* His dress was priestly, for he is the high-priest of our profession, *clothed in linen*, as the high-priest himself was, on the day of atonement, that great day; *his loins were girded*, (in St John's vision his *paps* were girded) *with a golden girdle*, of the finest gold, that of Uphaz, for every thing about Christ is the best in its kind. The *girding of the loins* notes his ready and diligent application to his work, as his Father's servant, in the business of our redemption. His *shape* was *amiable*, *his body like the beryl*, a precious stone of a sky-colour; *his countenance was awful*, and enough to strike a terror on the beholders, for his face was *as the appearance of lightning*, which dazzles the eyes, both *frightens* and *threatens*; his eyes were bright and sparkling, *as lamps of fire*; his *arms and feet shone like polished brass*, ver. 6. His voice was loud and strong and very piercing, *like the voice of a multitude*. The *Vox Dei* can over-power the *vox populi*. Thus glorious did Christ appear, and it should engage us, (1.) To think highly and honourably of him. *Now consider how great this man is*, and in all things let him have the pre-eminence. (2.) To admire his condescension for us and our salvation. Over all this splendor he drew a veil, when he took upon him the form of a servant, and *emptied himself*.

4. The wonderful influence that this appearance had upon Daniel, and his attendants, and the terror that it struck upon him and them.

1. His attendants *saw not the vision*, it was not fit they should be honoured with the sight of it; there is a divine revelation vouchsafed to all, from converse with which none are excluded, that do not exclude themselves: but such a vision must be peculiar to Daniel, that was a favourite. Paul's companions were aware of the *light*, but *saw no man*, Acts ix. 7.—xxii. 9. Note, It is the honour of those who are beloved of God, that what is hid from others is known to them. Christ *manifests himself to them but not to the world*, John xiv. 22. But tho' they saw not the vision, they were seized with an *unaccountable* trembling, either from the voice they heard, or from some strange

concussion or vibration of the air they felt, so it was, that *a great quaking fell upon them*, so that they fled to hide themselves, probably among the willows that grew by the river's side. Note, There are many that have a *spirit of bondage to fear*, that never receive a *spirit of adoption*; to whom Christ has been, and will be never otherwise but a terror. Now the fright that Daniel's attendants were in, is a confirmation of the truth of the vision; it could not be Daniel's fancy, or the product of a heated imagination of his own, for it had a real powerful, and strange effect upon those about him.

2. He himself saw it, and saw it alone, but he was not able to bear the sight of it. It not only dazzled his eyes, but overwhelmed his spirit, so that *there remained no strength in him*, ver. 8. He said as Moses himself, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. His spirits were all so employed, either in an intense speculation of the glory of this vision, or in the fortifying of his heart against the terror of it, that his body was left in a manner lifeless and spiritless: he had no vigour in him, and was but one remove from a dead carcase: he looked as pale as death, his colour was gone, and his *comeliness* in him was *turned into corruption*, and he *retained no strength*. Note, The greatest and best of men cannot bear the immediate discoveries of divine glory; no man can see it and live, it is next to death to see a glimpse of it, as Daniel here; but glorified saints *see Christ* as he is, and can *bear the sight*. But tho' Daniel was thus dispirited with the vision of Christ, yet he *heard the voice of his words*, and knew what he said. Note, We must take heed, lest our reverence of God's glory, by which we should be awakened to hear his voice, both in his word and in his providence, should degenerate into such a dread of him, as will disable or indispose us to hear it. It should seem that when the *vision of Christ terrified Daniel*, the voice of his words soon pacified and composed him, silenced his fear, and laid him to sleep in a holy security and serenity of mind; when *I heard the voice of his words*, *I fell into a slumber*, a sweet slumber, *on my face*, and *my face towards the ground*: when he saw the vision he threw himself *prostrate*, into a posture of the most humble adoration, and *dropt asleep*, not as *careless* of what he heard and saw, but charmed with it. Note, How dreadful soever Christ may appear to those that are under convictions of sin, and in terror by reason of it, there is enough in his word to quiet their spirits and make them easy, if they but attend to it, and apply it.

10. ¶ And I behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands. 11. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright: for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. 12. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thy self before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. 13. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael one of the chief princes came to help me, and I remained there with the kings of Persia. 14. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days. 15. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. 16. And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. 17. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. 18. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me. 19. And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. 20. Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. 21. But I will shew thee *that which* it noted in the scripture of truth: and *there is none* that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

Much ado here is to bring Daniel to be able to bear what Christ has to say to him; still we have him in a fright, hardly, and

and very slowly recovering himself, but is still answered and supported, with good words, and comfortable words. Let us see how Daniel is by degrees brought to himself, and gather up the several passages that are to the same purpose.

1. Daniel is in a great consternation, and finds it very difficult to get clear of it. The hand that touched him, set him at first upon his knees, and the palms of his hands, ver. 10. Note, Strength and comfort commonly comes by degrees to those that have been long cast down and disquieted; they are first helped up a little, and then more. After two days he will revive us, and then the third day he will raise us up. And we must not despise the day of small things, but be thankful for the beginnings of mercy. Afterwards he is helped up, but he stands trembling, ver. 11. for fear lest he fall again. Note, Before God gives strength and power unto his people, he makes them sensible of their own weakness. I trembled in my self, that I might rest in the day of trouble, Hab. iii. 16.

But when afterwards Daniel recovered so much strength in his limbs that he could stand steady, yet he tells us, ver. 15. that he set his face towards the ground and became dumb; he was as a man astonished that knew not what to say; struck dumb with admiration and fear, and is loth to enter into discourse with one so far above him; he kept silence, yea even from good, till he had recollected himself a little. Well, at length he recovered not only the use of his feet, but the use of his tongue: and when he opened his mouth, ver. 16. that which he had to say, was to excuse his having been so long silent, for really he durst not speak, he could not speak. O my lord (so, in great humility this prophet calls the angel, tho' the angels in great humility called themselves fellow-servants to the prophets, Rev. xxii. 9.) by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, they break in upon me with violence, the sense of my sinful, sorrowful, state turns upon me when I see thy purity and brightness. Note, Man that has lost his integrity has reason to blush and be ashamed of himself, when he sees or considers the glory of the blessed angels that keep their integrity. My sorrows turned upon me, and I have retained no strength to resist them, or bear up a head against them. And again, ver. 17. like one half dead with the fright, he complains. As for me, straitway there remained no strength in me to receive these displays of the divine glory, and these discoveries of the divine will. Nay, there is no breath left in me, such a deliquium did he suffer, that he could not draw one breath after another, but panted and languished, and was in a manner breathless. See how well it is for us that the treasure of divine revelation is put into earthen vessels, that God speaks to us by men like our selves, and not by angels: whatever we may wish in a peevish dislike of the method God takes in dealing with us, it is certain, if we were tried we should all be of Israel's mind at mount Sinai, when they said to Moses, Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die, Exod. xx. 19. If Daniel could not bear it, how could we? Now this he insists upon as an excuse for his irreverent silence; which otherwise had been blame-worthy. How can the servant of this my Lord, talk with this my Lord? ver. 17. Note, Whenever we enter into communion with God, it becomes us to have a due sense of the vast distance and disproportion that there is between us and the holy angels, and of the infinite distance, and no proportion at all between us and the holy God; and to acknowledge that we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. How shall we that are dust and ashes speak to the Lord of glory!

2. The blessed angel that was employed by Christ to converse with him, gave him all the encouragement and comfort that could be. It should seem, it was not he whose glory he saw in vision, ver. 5, 6. that here touched him, and talked with him; that was Christ, but this seems to have been the angel Gabriel, whom Christ had once before ordered to instruct Daniel, chap. viii. 16. That glorious appearance (as that of the God of glory to Abraham, Acts vii. 2.) was to give authority and to gain attention to what the angel should say. Christ himself comforted John, when he in a like case fell at his feet as dead, Rev. i. 17. but here he did it by the angel, whom Daniel saw in a glory much inferior to that of the vision, in the verses before; for he was like the similitude of the sons of men, ver. 16. one like the appearance of a man, ver. 18. When he only appeared, as he had done before, chap. ix. 21. we do not find that Daniel was put into any disorder by it, as he was by this vision; and therefore he is here employed a third time with Daniel.

1. He lent him his hand to help him; touched him, and set him upon his hands and knees, ver. 10. else he had still lain grovelling; touched his lips, ver. 16. else he had been still dumb; again he touched him, ver. 18. and put strength into him, else he had still been staggering, and trembling: Note, The hand of God's power going along with the word of his grace is alone effectual to redress all our grievances, and to rectify whatever is amiss in us. One touch from heaven brings us to our knees, sets us on our feet, opens our lips, and strengthens us; for it is God that works on us, and works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

2. He assured him of the great favour that God had for him. Thou art a man greatly beloved, ver. 11. And again, ver. 19. O man greatly beloved. Note, Nothing is more likely, nothing

more effectual to revive the drooping spirits of the saints, than to be assured of God's love to them. Those are greatly beloved indeed whom God loves, and it is comfort enough to know it.

3. He silenced his fears; and encouraged his hopes, with good words and comfortable words. He said unto him, Fear not, Daniel, ver. 12. And again, ver. 19. O man greatly beloved, fear not, peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. Never did any tender mother quiet her child, when any thing had grieved or frightened it, with more compassion and affection than the angel here quieted Daniel. Those that are beloved of God have no reason to be afraid of any evil; peace is to them; God himself speaks peace to them; and they ought upon the warrant of that to speak peace to themselves. And that peace, that joy of the Lord will be their strength. Will God plead against us with his great power, will he take the advantage against us of our being overcome by his terror? No, but he will put strength into us, Job xxiii. 6. so he did into Daniel here, when by reason of the lustre of the vision no strength of his own remained in him; and he acknowledgeth it, ver. 19. When he had spoken to me I was strengthened. Note, God by his word puts life and strength and spirit into his people, for if he saith be strong, power goes along with the word. And now Daniel has experienced the efficacy of God's strengthening word and grace he is ready for any thing; now, let my Lord speak, and I can hear it, I can bear it, and am ready to do according to it, for thou hast strengthened me. Note, To those that (like Daniel here) have no might, God increaseth strength, Isa. xl. 29. And we cannot keep up our communion with God, but by strength derived from him; but when he is pleased to put strength into us, we must make a good use of it, and say, Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears. Let God enable us to comply with his will, and then, whatever it is, we will stand compleat in it. Da quod jubes, & jube quod vis.

4. He assures him, That his fastings and prayers were come up for a memorial before God, as the angel told Cornelius, Acts x. 4. Ver. 12. Fear not, Daniel. It is natural to fallen man to be afraid of an extraordinary messenger from heaven, as dreading to hear evil tidings thence; but Daniel needs not fear, for he has by his three weeks humiliation and supplication sent extraordinary messengers to heaven, which he may expect to return with an olive-branch of peace; from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand the word of God that is to be the rule of thy prayers, and to chasten thy self before thy God, that thou mightest put an edge upon thy prayers, thy words were heard; as before, at the beginning of thy supplication, chap. ix. 24. Note, As the entrance of God's word is enlightning to the upright, so the entrance of their prayers is pleasing to him, Psal. cxix. 130. From the first day that we begin to look towards God in a way of duty, he is ready to meet us in a way of mercy. Thus ready is God to hear prayer, I said I will confess, and thou forgavest.

5. He tells him that he was sent to him on purpose to bring him a prediction of the future state of the church, as a token of God's accepting his prayers for the church, Knowest thou whersore I come unto thee? If thou knewest on what errand I come, thou wouldst not be put into such a consternation by it. Note, If we rightly understand the meaning of God's dealings with us, and the methods of his providence and grace concerning us, we would be better reconciled to them. I am come for thy words, ver. 12. to bring thee a gracious answer to thy prayers; thus, when God's praying people do call to him, he saith, Here I am, Isa. lviii. 9. what would you have with me? See the power of prayer, what glorious things it has in its time fetched from heaven, what strange discoveries! On what errand did this angel come to Daniel? He tells him, ver. 14. I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days. Daniel was a curious inquisitive man, that had all his days been searching into secret things, and it would be a mighty gratification to him to be let into the knowledge of things to come. Daniel had always been concerned for the church, its interests lay much upon his heart, and it would be a particular satisfaction to him to know what its state should be, and he would know the better what to pray for as long as he lived. He was now lamenting the difficulties which his people met with in the present day; but that he might not be offended in those, the angel must tell him what greater difficulties are yet before them; and if they be wearied, now they only run with the foot-men, how will they contend with horses? Note, It would abate our resentment of present troubles, to consider that we know not but much greater are before us which we are concerned to provide for. Daniel must be made to know what shall befall his people in the latter days of the church, after the cessation of prophecy, and when the time drew nigh for the Messiah to appear, for yet the vision is for many days; the principal things that this vision was intended to give the church the foresight of, would come to pass in the days of Antiochus, near three hundred years after this. Now, that which the angel is entrusted to communicate to Daniel, and which Daniel is encouraged to expect from him, is not any curious speculations, moral prognostications, or rational prospects of his own, though he is an angel, but what he has received from the Lord. It was the revelation of Jesus Christ that

that the angel gave to St John, to be delivered to the churches, Rev. i. 1. So here, ver. 21. *I will shew thee what is written in the scriptures of truth, i. e. what is fixed in the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God. The decree of God is a thing written, it is a scripture, which remains, and cannot be altered; what I have written I have written.* As there are scriptures for the revealed will of God, the letters-patent, which are published to the world, so there are scriptures for the secret will of God, the close rolls, which are sealed among his treasures; the book of his decrees: both are scriptures of truth, nothing shall be added to, or taken from, either of them. The secret things belong not to us, only now and then some few paragraphs have been copied out from the book of God's counsels, and delivered to the prophets for the use of the church, as here to Daniel; but they are the things revealed, even the words of this law which belong to us and to our children; and we are concerned to study what is written in these scriptures of truth, for they are things which belong to our everlasting peace.

6. He gives him a general account of the adversaries of the church's cause, from whom it might be expected troubles would arise, and of its patrons, under whose protection it might be assured of safety and victory at last.

1. The kings of the earth are and will be its adversaries; for they set themselves against the Lord, and against his anointed, Psal. ii. 2. The angel tells Daniel that he was to have come to him with a gracious answer to his prayers, but the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood him one and twenty days, just the three weeks that Daniel had been fasting and praying; Cambyfes king of Persia had been very busy to embarrass the affairs of the Jews, and to do them all the mischief he could, and the angel had been all that time employed to counter-work him; so that he had been constrained to defer his visit to Daniel till now, for angels can be but in one place at a time. Or, as Dr Lightfoot saith, This new king of Persia by hindring the temple, had hindered those good tidings which otherwise he should have brought him. The kings and kingdoms of the world were indeed sometimes helpful to the church, but more often they were injurious to it. When I am gone forth from the kings of Persia, when their monarchy is brought down for their unkindnesses to the Jews, then the prince of Grecia shall come, ver. 20. The Grecian monarchy, though favourable to the Jews at first as the Persian was, yet will come to be vexatious to them; such is the state of the church-militant, when it is got clear of one enemy, it has another to encounter; and such a hydra's head is that of the old serpent; when one storm is blown over, it is not long before another riseth.

2. The God of heaven is and will be its protector, and under him the angels of heaven its patrons and guardians.

1. Here is the angel Gabriel busy in the service of the church; making his part good in defence of it twenty one days, against the prince of Persia, and remaining there with the kings of Persia, as consul or lieger-embassador, to take care of the affairs of the Jews in that court, and to do them service, ver. 13. And though much was done against them by the kings of Persia, God permitting it, it is likely much more mischief would have been done them, and they would have been quite ruined (witness Haman's plot) if God had not prevented it by the ministration of angels. Gabriel resolves, when he has dispatched this errand to Daniel, that he will return to fight with the prince of Persia, will continue to oppose him, and will at length humble and bring down that proud monarchy, ver. 20. though he knows another as mischievous, even that of Grecia will rise in stead of it.

2. Here is Michael our prince, the great protector of the church, and the patron of its just but injured cause. The first of the chief princes, ver. 13. Some understand it of a created angel, but an archangel, of the highest order, 1 Thess. iv. 16. Jude 9. Others think Michael the archangel is no other but Christ himself, the angel of the covenant, and the lord of the angels, he whom Daniel saw in vision, ver. 5. He came to help me, ver. 13. and there is none but he that holdeth with me in these things, ver. 21. Christ is the church's prince; angels are not, Heb. ii. 5. He presides in the affairs of the church, and effectually provides for its good. He is said to hold with the angels, for it is he that makes them serviceable to the heirs of salvation: and if he were not on the church's side its case were bad. But, saith David, and so saith the church, The Lord taketh my part with them that help me, Psal. cxviii. 7. The Lord is with them that uphold my soul, Psal. liv. 4.

C H A P. XI.

The angel Gabriel in this chapter performs his promise made to Daniel in the foregoing chapter, that he would shew him what should befall his people in the latter days, according to that which was written in the scriptures of faith: very particularly doth he here foretel the succession of the kings of Persia and Gre-

cia, and the affairs of their kingdoms; especially the mischief which Antiochus Epiphanes did in his time to the church, which was foretold before, chap. viii. 11, 12. Here is, (1.) A brief prediction of the setting up of the Grecian monarchy upon the ruins of the Persian monarchy, which was now newly begun, ver. 1—4. (2.) A prediction of the affairs of two kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, with reference to each other, ver. 5—20. (3.) Of the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes, and his actions and successes, ver. 21—29. (4.) Of the great mischief that he should do to the Jewish nation and religion, and his contempt of all religion, ver. 30—39. (5.) Of his fall and ruin at last, when he is in the heat of his pursuit, ver. 40—45.

1. **A**LSO I, in the first year of Darius the Mede; even I stood to confirm and to strengthen him. 2. And now will I shew thee the truth, Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. 3. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. 4. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others besides those.

Here, 1. The angel Gabriel lets Daniel know the good service he had done to the Jewish nation, ver. 1. In the first year of Darius the Mede who destroyed Babylon, and released the Jews out of that house of bondage, I stood a strength and fortress to him, i. e. I was instrumental to protect him, and give him success in his wars, and after he had conquered Babylon to confirm him in his resolution to release the Jews; which, it is likely, met with much opposition. Thus by the angel, and at the request of the watcher, the golden head was broken, and the ax laid to the root of the tree. Note, We must acknowledge the hand of God in the strengthening of those that are friends to the church for the service they are to do it, and confirming them in their good resolutions: and herein he useth the ministry of angels more than we are aware of. And the many instances we have known of God's care of his church formerly, encourageth us to depend upon him in further straits and difficulties.

2. He foretels the reign of four Persian kings, ver. 2. Now I will tell thee the truth, i. e. the true meaning of the visions of the great image, and of the four beasts, and expound in plain terms what was before represented by dark types. (1.) There shall stand up three kings in Persia, besides Darius, in whose reign this prophecy is dated, chap. x. 1. Mr Broughton makes these three to be Cyrus, Artaxasta, or Artaxerxes, called of the Greeks Cambyfes, and Ahasuerus, that married Esther, called Darius son of Hystaspes. To these three the Persians gave these attributes, Cyrus was a father, Cambyfes a master, and Darius a hoarder up. So Herodotus. (2.) There shall be a fourth far richer than they all, viz. Xerxes, of whose wealth the Greek authors take notice. By his strength, i. e. his vast army, consisting of eight hundred thousand men at least, and his riches, with which he maintained and paid that vast army, he stirred up all against the realm of Greece. Xerxes's expedition against Greece is famous in history, and his shameful defeat that he met with. He that when he went out was the terror of Greece, in his return was the scorn of Greece. Daniel needed not be told what disappointment he would meet with, for he was a hinderer of the building of the temple; but soon after, about thirty years after the first return from captivity, Darius, a young king, revived the building of the temple, owning the hand of God against his predecessors for hindring it, Ezra vi. 7.

3. He foretels Alexander's Conquests, and the partition of his kingdom, ver. 3. He is that mighty king that shall stand up against the kings of Persia, and he shall rule with great dominion over many kingdoms, and with a despotick power, for he shall do according to his will, and undo likewise, which by the law of the Medes and Persians, their kings could not: when Alexander, after he had conquered Asia, would be worshipped as a god, then this was fulfilled, that he shall do according to his will. That is God's prerogative, but was his pretension. But, ver. 4. his kingdom shall soon be broken, and divided into four parts, but not to his posterity, nor shall any of his successors reign according to his dominion; none of them shall have such large territories, nor such an absolute power. His kingdom was plucked up for others besides those of his own family. Arideus, his brother, was made king in Macedonia; Olympias, Alexander's mother, killed him; and poisoned Alexander's two sons, Hercules and Alexander: thus was his family rooted out by its own hands. See what decaying, perishing, things worldly pomp and possessions are, and the powers by which they are got. Never was the vanity of the world and its greatest things shewed more evidently than in the story of Alexander; all is vanity and vexation of spirit.

5. ¶ And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes, and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion : his dominion *shall be* a great dominion. 6. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together ; for the kings daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement : but she shall not retain the power of the arm, neither shall he stand, nor his arm ; but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in *these* times. 7. But out of a branch of her root shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortresses of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail : 8. And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold, and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the north. 9. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. 10. But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces : and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through : then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortresses. 11. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north : and he shall set forth a great multitude, but the multitude shall be given into his hand. 12. And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up, and he shall cast down many ten thousands ; but he shall not be strengthened by it. 13. For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come (after certain years) with a great army, and with much riches. 14. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south : also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision, but they shall fall. 15. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities, and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither *shall there be any* strength to withstand. 16. But he that cometh against him, shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him : and he shall stand in the glorious land which by his hand shall be consumed. 17. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him : thus shall he do, and he shall give him the daughter of women corrupting her : but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. 18. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many : but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him, to cease ; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. 19. Then he shall turn his face towards the fort of his own land : but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. 20. Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom ; but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle.

Here is foretold,

1. The rise and power of two great kingdoms, out of the remains of Alexander's conquests, ver. 5. (1.) The kingdom of Egypt, which was made considerable by Ptolemæus Lagus, one of Alexander's captains, whose successors were from him called the Lagidæ. He is called the king of the south, i. e. Egypt, named here, ver. 8, 42, 43. The countries that at first belonged to Ptolemy are reckoned to be Egypt, Phœnicia, Arabia, Libya, Ethiopia, &c. Theoc. Idyl. 17. (2.) The kingdom of Syria, which was set up by Seleucus Nicanor, or, the conqueror ; he was one of Alexander's princes, and became stronger than the other ; and had the greatest dominion of all, was the most powerful of all Alexander's successors ; it was said he had no less than seventy-two kingdoms under him. Both these were strong against Judah (the affairs of which are particularly eyed in this prediction). Ptolemy soon after he gained Egypt invaded Judea, and took Jerusalem on a sabbath, pretending a friendly visit. Seleucus also gave disturbance to Judea.

2. The fruitless attempt to unite these two kingdoms, as iron and clay in Nebuchadnezzar's image, ver. 6. At the end of certain

years, about seventy after Alexander's death, the Lagidæ and the Seleucidæ shall associate ; but not in sincerity : Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, shall marry his daughter Bernice to Antiochus Theos king of Syria, who had already a wife called Laodice. Bernice shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but it shall not hold ; she shall not retain the power of the arm, neither she nor her posterity shall establish themselves in the kingdom of the north, neither shall Ptolemy her father, nor Antiochus her husband (betwixt whom there was to be a great alliance) stand, nor their arm, but she shall be given up and they that brought her, all that projected that unhappy marriage between her and Antiochus, which occasioned so much mischief, instead of producing a coalition between the northern and southern crowns, as was hoped. Antiochus divorced Bernice, took his former wife Laodice again, who soon after poisoned him, procured Bernice and her son to be murdered, and set up her own son by Antiochus, to be king, who was called Seleucus Callinicus.

3. A war between the two kingdoms, ver. 7, 8. A branch from the same root with Bernice shall stand up in his estate. Ptolemæus Evergetes, the son and successor of Ptolemæus Philadelphus shall come with an army against Seleucus Callinicus, king of Syria to avenge his sister's quarrel, and shall prevail. And he shall carry away a rich booty both of persons and goods into Egypt ; and shall continue more years than the king of the north : This Ptolemy reigned forty six years ; and Justin saith, if his own affairs had not called him home, he had in this war made himself master of the whole kingdom of Syria. But, ver. 9. he shall be forced to come into his kingdom, and return into his own land, to keep peace there, so that he can no longer carry on the war abroad. Note, It is very common for a treacherous peace to end in a bloody war.

4. The long and busy reign of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. Seleucus Callinicus, that king of the north, that was overcome, ver. 7. and died miserably, left two sons, Seleucus and Antiochus ; these are his sons, i. e. the sons of the king of the north that shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces to recover what their father had lost, ver. 10. But Seleucus the elder being weak, and unable to rule his army, was poisoned by his friends, and reigned only two years ; and his brother Antiochus succeeded him, who reigned thirty-seven years, and was called the Great : And therefore the angel, tho' he speaks of sons at first, goes on with the account of one only ; who was but fifteen years old when he began to reign, and he shall certainly come and overflow, and over-run, and shall be restored at length to what his father lost. (1.) The king of the south in this war shall at first have very great success. Ptolemæus Philopater, moved with indignation at the indignities done him by Antiochus the Great, shall (tho' otherwise a slothful prince) come forth and fight with him ; and shall bring a vast army into the field of seventy thousand foot, and five thousand horse, and seventy-three elephants. And the other multitude (i. e. the army of Antiochus, consisting of sixty-two thousand foot, and six thousand horse, and a hundred and two elephants) shall be given into his hand. Polybius, who lived with Scipio, has given a particular account of this battle of Raphia. Ptolemæus Philopater having gained this victory, grew very insolent ; his heart was lifted up, then he went into the temple of God at Jerusalem, and, in defiance of the law, entered the most holy place ; for which God has a controversy with him, so that tho' he shall cast down many myriads, yet he shall not be strengthened by it, so as to secure his interest. For the king of the north, Antiochus the Great, shall return with a greater army than the former ; and at the end of times, that is, years, he shall come often with a mighty army, and great riches, against the king of the south, viz. Ptolemæus Epiphanes, who succeeded Ptolemæus Philopater his father, when he was a child, which gave advantage to Antiochus the Great. In this expedition he had some powerful allies, ver. 14. many shall stand up against the king of the south ; Philip of Macedon was confederate with Antiochus against the king of Egypt, and Scopas, his general, whom he sent into Syria ; Antiochus routed him, destroyed a great part of his army ; whereupon the Jews willingly yielded to Antiochus, joined with him, helped him to besiege Ptolemæus's garrisons, then the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision, to help forward the accomplishment of this prophecy, but they shall fall, and shall come to nothing, ver. 14. hereupon, ver. 15. the king of the north, this same Antiochus Magnus, shall carry on his design against the king of the south another way. (1.) He shall surprise his strong holds ; all that he has got in Syria and Samaria, and the arms of the south, all the power of the king of Egypt shall not be able to withstand him. See how dubious and variable the turns of the scale of war are ; like buying and selling, it is winning and losing ; sometimes one side gets the better, and sometimes the other ; yet neither by chance, it is not as they call it, the fortune of war, but according to the will and counsel of God, who brings some low, and raiseth others up. (2.) He shall make himself master of the land of Judea, ver. 6. He that comes against him, i. e. the king of the north shall carry all before him, and do what he pleases, and he shall stand, and get footing in the glorious land, so the land of Israel was ; and by his hand it was wasted and consumed ; for with the spoil of that good land he victualled his vast army. The land of Judea lay between these two potent kingdoms of Egypt and Syria, so that in all the struggles between them, that was sure to suffer ; for to it they both bore ill will. Yet some read this, by his hand it shall

be perfected; as if it intimated, that the land of Judea being taken under the protection of this Antiochus, shall flourish, and be in better condition than it had been. (3.) He shall still push on his war against the king of Egypt, and set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, taking advantage of the infancy of Ptolemy Epiphanes, and the upright ones, i. e. many of the pious Israelites, siding with him, ver. 17. And in prosecution of his design, he shall give him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; designing, as Saul, in giving his daughter to David, that she should be a snare to him, and do him a mischief; but she shall not stand of her father's side, nor be for him, but for her husband, and so that plot failed him. (4.) His war with the Romans is here foretold, ver. 18. he shall turn his face to the isles, ver. 18. the isles of the Gentiles, Gen. x. 5. Greece and Italy. He took many of the isles about the Hellespont, Rhodes, Samos, Delos, &c. which by war or treaty he made himself master of; but a prince, or state, so some, even the Roman senate, or a leader, even the Roman general, shall return his reproach, with which he abused the Romans, upon himself; or, shall make his shame rest on himself: And without his own shame, or any disgrace to himself, shall pay him again. This was fulfilled when the two Scipios were sent with an army against Antiochus; Hannibal was then with him, and advised him to invade Italy, and waste it as he had done; but he did not take his advice; and Scipio joined battle with him and gave him a total defeat, tho' Antiochus had seventy thousand men, and the Romans but thirty thousand. Thus he caused the reproach offered by him to cease. (5.) His fall: When he was totally routed by the Romans, and was forced to quit all he had in Europe to them, and had a very heavy tribute exacted from him, he turned to his own land, and not knowing which way to raise money, to pay his tribute he plundered a temple of Jupiter, which so incensed his own subjects against him, that they set upon him and killed him, so he was overthrown and fell, and was no more found, ver. 19. (6.) His next successor, ver. 20. There rose up one in his place, a raiser of taxes, a sender forth of the extortioner, or extorter: This character was remarkably answered in Seleucus Philopater, the elder son of Antiochus the Great, who was a great oppressor of his own subjects; and exacted abundance of money from them; and when he was told he would thereby lose his friends, he said, he knew no better friend he had than money. He likewise attempted to rob the temple at Jerusalem, which this seems especially to refer to. But within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle, but poisoned by Heliodorus, one of his own servants; when he had reigned but twelve years, and done nothing remarkable.

From all this let us learn, (1.) That God in his providence sets up one, and pulls down another, as he pleaseth; advanceth some from low beginnings, and depresseth others that were very high. Some have called great men the foot-ball of fortune; or, rather they are the tools of providence. (2.) This world is full of wars and fightings, which come from mens lusts, and make it a theatre of sin and misery. (3.) All the changes and revolutions of states and kingdoms, and every event, even the most minute and contingent, was plainly and perfectly foreseen by the God of heaven, and to him nothing is new. (4.) No word of God shall fall to the ground; but what he hath designed, what he hath declared, shall infallibly come to pass; and even the sins of men shall be made to serve his purpose, and contribute to the bringing of his counsels to birth in their season; and yet God is not the author of sin. (5.) That for the right understanding of some parts of scripture, it is necessary that heathen authors be consulted, which give light to the scripture, and shew the accomplishment of what is there foretold; we have therefore reason to bless God for the human learning, with which many have done great service to divine truths.

21. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. 22. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. 23. And after the league made with him, he shall work deceitfully; for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. 24. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province, and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers, he shall scatter among them the prey and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. 25. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army, and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. 26. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat, shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow; and many shall fall down slain. 27. And both these kings hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall

speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. 28. Then shall he return into his land with great riches, and his heart shall be against the holy covenant: and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. 29. At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south, but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. 30. ¶ For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do, he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. 31. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. 32. And such as do wickedly against the covenant, shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God, shall be strong, and do exploits. 33. And they that understand among the people, shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity and by spoil many days. 34. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. 35. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. 36. And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god; and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined, shall be done. 37. Neither shall he regard the god of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not, shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. 40. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him, and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships, and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold, and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Lybians, and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. 44. But tidings out of the east, and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. 45. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.

All this is a prophecy of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn spoken of before, chap. viii. ix. a sworn enemy to the Jewish religion, and a bitter persecutor of those that adhered to it. What troubles the Jews met with in the reigns of the Persian kings, were not so particularly foretold to Daniel as these; because then they had living prophets with them, Haggai and Zechariah to encourage them, but these troubles in the days of Antiochus were foretold, because before that time prophecy would cease, and they would find it necessary to have recourse to the written word. Some things in this prediction concerning Antiochus, are alluded to in the New Testament predictions of the Antichrist, especially, ver. 36, 37. And as it is usual with the prophets when they foretel the prosperity of the Jewish church, to make use of such expressions, as were applicable to the kingdom of Christ, and insensibly to slide into a prophecy of that, so when they foretel the troubles of the church, they make use of such expressions as have a further reference to the kingdom of the Antichrist, the rise and ruin of that.

Now concerning Antiochus, the angel foretels here,

1. His character: He shall be a *vile person*: He called himself Epiphanes, the *illustrious*, but his character was the reverse of his surname. The heathen writers describe him to be an *odd humoured* man, rude and boisterous, base and fordid. He would sometimes steal out of the court into the city, and herd himself with any *scoundrel* company, *incognito*; he made himself a companion of the common sort, and the basest strangers that came to town. He had the most unaccountable whims, so that some took him to be *silly*, others to be *mad*. Hence he was called Epimanes, the mad man. He is called a *vile person*, for he had been a long time a hostage at Rome for the fidelity of his father, when the Romans had subdued him: And it was agreed, that when the other hostages were *exchanged*, he should *continue* a prisoner at large.

2. His accession to the crown. By a trick he got his elder brother's son, Demetrius, to be sent a hostage to Rome in exchange for him, contrary to the cartel; and his elder brother being made away by Heliodorus, *ver. 20.* he took the kingdom. The states of Syria did not *give it him*, *ver. 21.* because they knew it belonged to his elder brother's son, nor did he get it by the sword, but *came in peaceably*, pretending to reign for his brother's son, Demetrius, then a hostage at Rome: But with the help of Eumenes and Attalus, neighbouring princes, he gained an interest in the people, and by *flatteries obtained the kingdom*, and established himself in it; and crushed Heliodorus who made head against him *with the arms of a flood*; they that opposed him were *overflowed and broken before him*; even the *prince of the covenant*, his nephew, the rightful heir, whom he pretended to *covenant with*, that he would *resign* to him, whenever he should return, *ver. 22.* But, *ver. 23.* after the league made with him, he shall *work deceitfully*, as one whose avowed maxim it is, That princes ought not to be bound by their word, any longer than it is for their interest. And *with a small people*, that at first cleave to him, he shall *become strong*, and *ver. 24.* He shall *enter peaceably upon the fattest places* of the kingdom of Syria, and very unlike his predecessors shall *scatter* among the people the *prey, and the spoil, and riches*, to insinuate himself into their affections, but at the same time, he shall *forecast his devices against the strong holds*, to make himself master of them; so that his generosity shall last but for a time; when he has got the garrisons into his hands, he will *scatter his spoil* no more, but rule by force; as those commonly do, that come in by fraud: He that comes in *like a fox*, reigns *like a lion*. Some understand these verses of his first expedition into Egypt, when he came not as an enemy, but as a friend and guardian to the young king Ptolemæus Philometor, and therefore brought with him but few followers, yet those stout men, and faithful to his interest, whom he placed in divers of the strong holds in Egypt, thereby making himself master of them.

3. His war with Egypt; which was his second expedition thither. This is described, *ver. 25, 26, 27.* Antiochus shall *stir up his power and courage* against Ptolemæus Philometor, king of Egypt. Ptolemy thereupon shall *be stirred up to battle* against him, shall come against him *with a very great and mighty army*; but Ptolemy, tho' he has such a vast army, shall not be able to stand before him; for Antiochus's army shall *overthrow* his, and overpower it, and great multitudes of the Egyptian army shall *fall down slain*. And no marvel, for the king of Egypt shall be betrayed by his own counsellors; they that *feed of the portion of his meat*, that eat of his bread, and live upon him, being bribed by Antiochus, shall *forecast devices against him*, and even *they shall destroy him*; and what fence is there against such treachery? After the battle a treaty of peace shall be set on foot, and these two kings shall meet at one council board, to adjust the articles of peace between them, but they shall neither of them be *sincere* in it; for they shall in their pretences and promises of amity and friendship *lie to one another*, for their hearts shall be at the same time to do one another all the mischief they can. And then no marvel *it shall not prosper*: The peace shall not last; but the end of it shall be at the time appointed in the divine providence, and then the war shall break out again; as a fore that is only skinned over.

4. Another expedition against Egypt. From the former he returned *with great riches*, *ver. 28.* and therefore took the first occasion to invade Egypt again, at the time appointed by the divine providence, two years after, in the eighth year of his reign, *ver. 29.* He shall come *towards the south*. But this attempt shall not succeed as the two former did, nor shall he gain his point, as he had done before once and again; for *ver. 30.* The ships of Chittim shall come against him, i. e. The navy of the Romans, or only ambassadors from the Roman senate, who came in ships. Ptolemæus Philometor, king of Egypt, being now in a strict alliance with the Romans, craved their aid against Antiochus, who had besieged him and his mother Cleopatra in the city of Alexandria: The Roman senate thereupon sent an embassy to Antiochus, to command him to raise the siege; which, when he desired some time to consider of, and consult with his friends about, Popilius, one of the ambassadors, with his staff drew a circle about him, and told him, as one having authority, he should give a *positive answer* before he came out of that circle; whereupon, fearing the Roman power, he was forced immediately to give orders for the raising of the siege, and the retreat of his army out of Egypt. So Livy and others relate the story which this prophecy refers to, *he shall be grieved*

and return, for it was a great vexation to him to be forced to yield thus.

5. His rage and cruel practices against the Jews. This is that part of his government, or mis-government rather, which is most enlarged upon in this prediction. In his return from his expedition into Egypt which he prophesied of, *ver. 28.* he *did exploits* against the Jews, in the sixth year of his reign: Then he spoiled the city and temple; but the most terrible storm was in his return from Egypt two years after, prophesied of, *ver. 30.* Then he took Judea in his way home; and, because he could not gain his point in Egypt by reason of the Romans interposing, he *reaked* his revenge upon the poor Jews, who gave him no provocation, but had greatly provoked God to permit him to do it, *Dan. viii. 23.*

1. He had a rooted antipathy to the Jews religion. *His heart was against the holy covenant*, *ver. 28.* And *ver. 30.* He had *indignation against the holy covenant*; that covenant of peculiarity by which the Jews were *incorporated* a people distinct from all other nations, and dignified above them. He *hated* the law of Moses, and the worship of the true God, and was *vexed* at the privileges of the Jewish nation, and the promises made to them. Note, That which is the hope and joy of the people of God is the envy of their neighbours, and that is the *holy covenant*. Esau hated Jacob, because he had got the blessing. And those that are strangers to the covenant, are often enemies to it.

2. He carried on his malicious designs against the Jews by the assistance of some perfidious apostate Jews. He kept up *intelligence with them that forsook the holy covenant*, *ver. 30.* Some of the Jews, that were false to their religion, and introduced the customs of the heathen, with whom they made a covenant. See the fulfilling of this, *1 Mac. i. 11—15.* where it is expressly said concerning those renegado Jews, that they *made themselves uncircumcised, and forsook the holy covenant*. And *2 Mac. iv. 9.* we read of Jason the brother of Onias the high-priest, who by the appointment of Antiochus set up a school at Jerusalem, *for the training up of youth in the fashions of the heathen*. And *2 Mac. iv. 23, &c.* of Menelaus, who fell in with the interests of Antiochus, and was the man that helped him into Jerusalem now in his last return from Egypt. We read much in the book of the Maccabees of the mischief done to the Jews by these treacherous men of their own nation, Jason, and Menelaus, and their party. These upon all occasions he made use of, *such as do wickedly against the covenant*, that throw up their religion and comply with the heathen, he shall *corrupt with flatteries*, to harden them in their apostasy, and to make use of them as decoys to draw in others, *ver. 32.* Note, It is not strange, if those who do not live up to their religion, but in their conversations *do wickedly against the covenant*, are easily *corrupted by flatteries* to quit their religion. They that make shipwreck of a good conscience, will soon *make shipwreck of the faith*.

3. He profaned the temple. *Arms stand on his part*, *ver. 31.* not only his own army which he now brought from Egypt, but a great party of deserters from the Jewish religion that joined with them, and they *polluted the sanctuary of strength*, not only the holy city, but the temple. The story of this we have, *1 Mac. i. 21, &c.* They *entred proudly into the sanctuary*, took away the *golden altar, and the candlestick, &c.* And therefore, *ver. 25.* There was a great mourning in Israel, the princes and elders mourned, &c. And *2 Mac. v. 15, &c.* Antiochus went into the most holy temple, Menelaus, that traitor to the laws, and to his own country, being his guide. Antiochus having resolved to bring all about him to be of his religion, *took away the daily sacrifice*, *ver. 31.* Some observe, that the word *Tammidh*, which signifies no more but *daily*, is only here and in the parallel place used for the *daily sacrifice*, as if there were a designed liberty left to supply it either with *sacrifice*, which was suppressed by Antiochus, or with *gospel worship*, which is suppressed by the Antichrist. Then he *set up the abomination of desolation upon the altar*, *1 Mac. i. 54.* even an idol altar, *ver. 59.* and called the temple, the temple of *Jupiter Olympius*, *2 Mac. vi. 2.*

4. He persecuted those who retained their integrity. Tho' there are many that *forfake the covenant*, and *do wickedly* against it, yet there is a people that *do know their God*, and retain the knowledge of him, and *they shall be strong and do exploits*, *ver. 32.* when others yield to the tyrants demands, and surrender their consciences to his impositions, they *bravely* keep their ground; resist the temptation, and make the tyrant himself ashamed of his attempt upon them. Good old Eleazar, one of the *principal scribes*, when he had swines flesh thrust into his mouth, bravely spit it out again, tho' he knew he must be tormented to death for so doing; and was so. *2 Mac. vi. 19.* The mother and her seven sons were put to death for adhering to their religion, *2 Mac. vii.* This might well be called *doing exploits*; for to chuse suffering rather than sin is a *great exploit*. And it was *by faith*, by being *strong in faith*, that they *did those exploits*, that *they were tortured not accepting deliverance*, as the apostle speaks probably with reference to that story, *Heb. xi. 35.* Or it may refer to the military courage and achievements of Judas Maccabæus, and others

others in opposition to him. Note, The right knowledge of God is and will be the strength of the soul, and, in the strength of that gracious soul, *do exploits*. They that know his name will put their trust in him, and by that trust will do great things.

Now, concerning this people that knew their God, we are here told, (1.) That *they shall instruct many*, ver. 33. They shall make it their business to shew others what they have learned themselves of the difference between truth and falsehood, good and evil. Note, They that have the knowledge of God themselves, should communicate their knowledge to those about them, and this spiritual charity must be extensive; they must *instruct many*. Some understand this of a society newly erected for the propagating of divine knowledge, called *Affideans*, godly men, *Pietists*, so the name signifies, that were both knowing and zealous in the law; these *instructed many*. Note, In times of persecution and apostasy, which are *trying times*; those that have knowledge, ought to make use of it for the *strengthening and establishing* of others. They that *understand* aright themselves, ought to do what they can to bring others to *understand*; for knowledge is a talent that must be traded with. Or, they shall instruct many by their perseverance in their duty, and their patient suffering for it: Good examples *instruct many*, and with many are the most powerful instructions. (2.) *They shall fall* by the cruelty of Antiochus; shall be put to the torture, and put to death by his rage. Tho' they are so excellent and intelligent themselves, and so useful and serviceable to others, yet Antiochus shall shew them no mercy, but *they shall fall for some days*. So it may be read. Rev. ii. 10. *Thou shalt have tribulation ten days*. We read much in the books of the Maccabees of Antiochus's barbarous usage of the pious Jews, how many he slew in wars, and how many he murdered in cold blood. Women were put to death for having their children *circumcised*, and their infants *hanged about their necks*, 1 Mac. i. 60, 61. But why did God suffer this? How can this be reconciled with the justice and goodness of God? I answer, Very well, if we consider what it was that God aimed at in this, ver. 35. *Some of them of understanding shall fall*; but it shall be for the good of the church, and for their own spiritual benefit. *It shall be, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white*. They needed these afflictions themselves; the best have their spots which must be washed off, their dross which must be purged out, and their troubles, particularly their *share in the public troubles*, help to do this; being sanctified to them by the grace of God: They are means of mortifying their corruptions, weaning them from the world, and awakening them to greater seriousness and diligence in religion. They *try* them, as silver in the furnace is refined from its dross; they *purge* them as wheat in the barn is winnowed from the chaff; and *make them white*, as cloth by the fuller is cleared from its spots. See 1 Pet. i. 7. Their sufferings for righteousness sake would try and purge the nation of the Jews, would convince them of the truth, excellency, and power of that holy religion which these *understanding* men died for their adherence to. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church; it is precious blood, and not a drop of it should be shed but upon such a valuable consideration. (3.) The cause of religion tho' it be thus *run upon*, yet it shall not be *run down*. *When they shall fall, they shall not be utterly cast down, but they shall be holpen with a little help*, ver. 34. Judas Maccabeus, and his brethren, and a few with them shall *make head* against the tyrant; and assert the injured cause of their religion; they *pulled down the idolatrous altars, circumcised the children that they found uncircumcised, recovered the law out of the hand of the Gentiles, and the work prospered in their hands*, 1 Mac. ii. 45. Note, Those that stand by the cause of religion when it is threatened and struck at, tho' they may not presently be delivered, and made victorious, yet they shall have *present help*. And a little help must not be *despised*; but when times are very bad, we must be thankful for *some reviving*. It is likewise foretold that *many shall cleave to them with flatteries*; when they see the Maccabees prosper, some Jews shall join with them, that are no true friends to religion, but only will pretend friendship, either with design to *betray them*, or in hope to *rise with them*; but the *fiery trial* (ver. 35.) will separate between the *precious* and the *vile*, and by it they that are *perfect* will be made manifest, and they that are not. (4.) Tho' these troubles may continue long, yet they will have an end; they are for a time appointed; a limited time, fixed in the divine counsels; this warfare shall be accomplished; *hitherto* the power of the enemy shall come, and no further, here shall its proud waves be staid.

5. He grew very proud, insolent, and profane, and being puffed up with the conquests, bid defiance to heaven, and trampled upon every thing that was sacred, ver. 36, &c. And here some think begins a prophecy of the Antichrist, the papal kingdom: And it is plain, St Paul in his prophecy of the rise and reign of the man of sin alludes to this here, 2 Thes. ii. 4. which shews that Antiochus was a type and figure of that enemy, as Babylon also was; but this being joined in a continued discourse with the foregoing prophecies concerning Antiochus, to me it seems probable, that to him it principally refers, and in him had its primary

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accomplishment, and has reference to the other only by way of accommodation.

1. He shall impiously dishonour the God of Israel; the only living and true God, called here the *God of gods*. He shall in defiance of him and his authority *do according to his will* against his people and his holy religion; he shall *exalt himself* above him, as Sennacherib did, and shall *speak marvellous things against him*, and against his laws and institutions: This was fulfilled, when Antiochus forbade sacrifices to be offered in God's temple, and ordered the sabbaths to be profaned, the sanctuary and the holy people to be polluted, &c. to the end they might forget the law, and change all the ordinances. And this upon pain of death, 1 Mac. i. 45.

2. He shall proudly put contempt upon all other gods; shall magnify himself above every god, even the gods of the nations; Antiochus wrote to his own kingdom, that every one should leave the gods he had worshipped, and worship such as he ordered, contrary to the practice of all the conquerors that went before him, 1 Mac. i. 41, 42. And all the heathen agreed according to the commandment of the king; as fond as they were of their gods, they did not think them worth suffering for, but their gods being idols, it was all alike to them what gods they worshipped. Antiochus did not regard any god, but magnified himself above all, ver. 37. He was so proud, that he thought himself above the condition of a mortal man, that he could *command the waves of the sea, and reach to the stars of heaven*, as his insolence and haughtiness is expressed. 2 Mac. ix. 8, 10. Thus he carried all before him till the indignation was accomplished, ver. 36. till he had run his length, and filled up the measure of his iniquity; for that that is determined shall be done, and nothing more, nothing short.

3. He shall, contrary to the way of the heathen, disregard the God of his fathers, ver. 37. Tho' an affection to the religion of their ancestors was among the heathen almost as natural to him as the desire of women; for if you search through the isles of Chittim, you will not find an instance of a nation that has changed their gods, Jer. ii. 10, 11. Yet Antiochus shall not regard the God of his fathers; he made laws to abolish the religion of his country, and to bring in the idols of the Greeks. And tho' his predecessors had honoured the God of Israel, and given great gifts to the temple at Jerusalem, 2 Mac. iii. 2, 3. he did the greatest indignities to God and his temple. His not regarding the desire of women, may speak either his barbarous cruelty, he shall spare no age or sex, no, not the tender ones; or, his unnatural lusts, or in general, his contempt of every thing which men of honour have a concern for: Or, it might be accomplished in something we meet not with in history. Its being joined to his not regarding the God of his fathers, intimates, that the idolatries of his country had in them more of the gratifications of the flesh than those of other countries, (Lucian has written of the Syrian goddesses) and yet that would not prevail to keep him to them.

4. He shall set up an unknown god; a new god, ver. 38. In his estate, in the room of the god of his fathers, (Apollo and Diana, deities of pleasure) he shall honour the god of forces, a supposed deity of power, a god whom his fathers knew not, nor worshipped; because he will be thought in wisdom and strength to excel his fathers, he shall honour this god with gold and silver and precious stones, thinking nothing too good for the god he had taken a fancy to. This seems to be Jupiter Olympius; known among the Phœnicians by the name of Baal-Semen, the lord of heaven, but never introduced among the Syrians till Antiochus did it. Thus shall he do in the most strong-holds, in the temple of Jerusalem, which is called the sanctuary of strength, ver. 31. and here the fortresses of munitions; there he shall set up the image of this strange god. Some read it, *He shall commit the munitions of strength*, or of the most strong God, i. e. the city Jerusalem to a strange god, he put it under the protection and government of Jupiter Olympius. This god he shall not only acknowledge, but shall increase with glory, by setting his image even upon God's altar. And he shall cause them that minister to this idol, to rule over many, shall put them into places of power and trust, and they shall divide the land for gain, shall be maintained richly out of the profits of the country. Some by the Mahuzzim, or god of forces, that Antiochus shall worship, understand money, which is said to answer all things, and which is the great idol of worldly people.

Now here is very much that is applicable to the man of sin; he exalteth himself above all that is called god, or that is worshipped; magnifies himself above all; his flatterers call him our lord god the Pope. By forbidding marriage; and magnifying the single life, he pretends not to regard the desire of women; and honours the god of forces, the god Mahuzzim, or strong-holds, i. e. saints and angels, whom his followers take for their protectors, as the heathen did of old their dæmons; these they make presidents of several countries, &c. These they honour with vast treasures dedicated to them, and therein the learned Mr Mede thinks this prophecy was fulfilled, and that it is referred to, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2.

5. Here seems to be another expedition into Egypt, or at least a struggle with Egypt. The Romans had tied him up from invading Ptolemy, but now that *king of the south pusheth at him*, ver. 40. makes an attempt upon some of his territories; whereupon Antiochus the *king of the north comes against him like a whirlwind*, with incredible swiftness and fury, with *chariots and horses, and many ships*, a great force; he shall come through countries, and shall overflow and pass over; in this flying march many countries shall be overthrown by him; and he shall enter into the glorious land, the land of Israel; it is the same word that is translated the *pleasant land*, chap. viii. 9. He shall make dreadful work among the nations thereabout, yet some shall escape his fury, particularly Edom and Moab, and the *chief of the children of Ammon*, ver. 41. He did not put these countries under contribution, because they had joined with him against the Jews. But especially the land of Egypt shall not escape, but he will quite beggar that, so bare will he strip it. This some reckon his fourth and last expedition against Egypt, in the tenth or eleventh year of his reign, under pretence of assisting the younger brother of Ptolemæus Philometor against him. We read not of any great slaughter made in this expedition, but great plunder, for it should seem that was it he came for, *He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and all the precious things of Egypt*, ver. 43. Polybius in Athenæus relates, that Antiochus having got together abundance of wealth by spoiling young Philometor, and breaking league with him, and by the contributions of his friends, bestowed a vast deal upon a triumph, in imitation of Paulus Æmilius; and describes the extravagance of it; here we are told how he got that money which he spent so profusely. Notice is here taken likewise of the use he made of the Libyans and Ethiopians, who bordered upon Egypt, they were at his steps, i. e. he had them at his foot, had them at his beck, and they made inroads upon Egypt to serve him.

6. Here is a prediction of the fall and ruin of Antiochus; as before, chap. viii. 25. when he is in the height of his honour, flushed with victory, and laden with spoils, tidings out of the east and out of the north (i. e. out of the north-east) shall trouble him, ver. 44. Or, he shall have intelligence both from the eastern and northern parts, that the king of Parthia is invading his kingdom. This obliged him to drop the enterprizes he had in hand, and to go against the Persians and Parthians that were revolting from him; and this vexed him; for now he thought utterly to have ruined and extirpated the Jewish nation, when that expedition called him off, in which he perished. This is explained by a passage in Tacitus, (tho' an impious one) where he commends Antiochus for his attempt to take away the superstition of the Jews, and bring in the manners of the Greeks among them (*ut teterrimam gentem in melius mutaret*) and laments that he was hindered from accomplishing it by the Parthian war. Now here is,

1. The last effort of his rage against the Jews, when he finds himself perplexed and embarrassed in his affairs, he shall go forth with great fury, to destroy, and utterly to make away many, ver. 44. The story of this we have, 1 Mac. iii. 27, &c. what a rage Antiochus was in when he heard of the successes of Judas Maccabæus, and the orders he gave to Lysias to destroy Jerusalem. Then he planted the tabernacles of his palace, or tents of his court, between the seas, between the great sea, and the Dead-sea: He set up his royal pavilion at Emmaus near Jerusalem, in token, that tho' he could not be present himself, yet he gave full power to his captains to prosecute the war against the Jews with the utmost rigour. He placed his tent there, as if he had taken possession of the glorious holy mountain, and called it his own. Note, When impiety grows very impudent, we may see its ruin near.

2. His exit. *He shall come to his end, and none shall help him*, i. e. God shall cut him off in the midst of his days, and none shall be able to prevent his fall. This is the same with that which was foretold, chap. viii. 25. *He shall be broken without hand*, where we took a view of his miserable end. Note, When God's time is come to bring proud oppressors to their end, none shall be able to help them, nor perhaps inclined to help them; for those that covet to be feared by all, when they are in their grandeur, when they come to be in distress, will find themselves loved by none; none will lend them so much as a hand or a prayer to help them; and if the Lord do not help, who shall?

Of the kings that came after Antiochus nothing is here prophesied, for that was the most malicious, mischievous, enemy to the church, that was a type of the son of perdition, whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming, and none shall help him.

C H A P. XII.

After the prediction of the troubles of the Jews under Antiochus, prefiguring the troubles of the Christian church under the antichristian power, we have here, (1.) Comforts, and very precious ones, prescribed as cordials for the support of God's people in those times of trouble, and they are such as may indifferently serve both for those former times of trouble under Antiochus, and those latter which were prefigured by them, ver. 1—4. (2.) A conference between Christ and an angel, concerning the time of the continuance of these events, designed for Daniel's satisfaction, ver. 5—7. (3.) Daniel's enquiry for his own satisfaction, ver. 8. And the answer he received to that enquiry, ver. 9—13.

1. **A**ND at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people, and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. 2. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. 3. And they that be wise, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever. 4. But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.

It is usual with the prophets, when they foretel the grievances of the church, to furnish it at the same time with proper antidotes; a remedy for every malady. And no relief is so sovereign, of such general application, so easily accommodated to every case, and of such powerful efficacy, as those that are fetched from Christ, and the future state; thence the comforts here are fetched.

1. Jesus Christ shall appear his church's patron and protector. At that time when the persecution is at the hottest, Michael shall stand up, ver. 1. The angel had told Daniel what a fast friend Michael was to the church, chap. x. 21. He all along shewed it in the upper world, the angels knew it, but now Michael shall stand up in his providence, and work deliverance for the Jews, when he sees that their power is gone, Deut. xxxii. 36. Christ is that great prince, for he is the prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. And if he stand up for his church, who can be against it? But this is not all, at that time, i. e. soon after, Michael shall stand up for the working out of our eternal salvation, the Son of God shall be incarnate, shall be manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Christ stood for the children of our people, when he was made sin and a curse for them, stood in their stead as a sacrifice, bore the curse for them, to bear it from them. He stands for them in the intercession he ever lives to make within the veil; stands up for them, and stands their friend. And after the destruction of Antichrist, of whom Antiochus was a type, Christ shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, shall appear for the compleat redemption of all his.

2. When Christ appears he will recompense tribulation to them that trouble his people. There shall be a time of trouble, threatening to all, but ruining to all the implacable enemies of God's kingdom among men, such trouble as never was since there was a nation. Which is applicable, (1.) To the destruction of Jerusalem; which Christ calls (perhaps with an eye to this here) such a great tribulation, as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, Mat. xxiv. 21. This the angel had spoken much of, chap. ix. 26, 27. and it happened, about the same time, that Christ set up the gospel kingdom in the world, that Michael our prince stands up. Or, (2.) To the judgment of the great day; that day that shall burn as an oven, and consume the proud, and all that do wickedly; that will be such a day of trouble as never was, to all those whom Michael our prince stands against.

3. He will work salvation for his people; at that time thy people shall be delivered, delivered from the mischief and ruin designed them by Antiochus, even all those that were marked for preservation, that were written among the living, Isa. iv. 3. When Christ comes into the world, he will save his spiritual Israel from sin and hell; and will, at his second coming, compleat their salvation, even the salvation of as many as were given him, as many as had their names in the book of life, Rev. xx. 15. They were written there before the world, and will be found written there at the end of the world, when the books shall be opened.

4. There shall be a distinguishing resurrection of them that sleep in the dust, ver. 2. (1.) When God works deliverance for

his people from persecution, it is a kind of resurrection; so the Jews release out of Babylon, was represented in vision, Ezek. xxxvii. and so the deliverance of the Jews from Antiochus, and other restorations of the church to outward prosperity, they were as *life from the dead*; many of them that had long slept in the dust of obscurity and calamity, shall then awake, some to that life, and honour, and comfort, that will be lasting, everlasting; but others, that when they return to their prosperity, will return to their iniquity, to them it will be a resurrection to *shame and contempt*, for the *prosperity of fools* will but expose them, and destroy them. (2.) When upon the appearing of Michael, our prince, his gospel is preached, many of them that *sleep in the dust*, both Jews and Gentiles, shall be awakened by it, to take upon them a profession of religion, and shall rise out of their heathenism or Judaism; but since there will be always a mixture of hypocrites with true saints, it is but some of them that are *raised to life*, to whom the gospel is a *savour of life unto life*, but others will be raised by it to *shame and contempt*, to whom the gospel of Christ will be a *savour of death unto death*; and Christ himself set for their fall. The net of the gospel incloseth both good and bad. But, (3.) It must be meant of the general resurrection at the last day. *The multitude of them that sleep in the dust shall awake*, i. e. all, which shall be a great many. *Or of them that sleep in the dust*, many shall arise to life, and many to shame. The Jews themselves understand this of the resurrection of the dead, at the end of time; and Christ seems to have had an eye to it when he speaks of the *resurrection of life*, and the *resurrection of damnation*, John v. 28. and upon this the Jews are said by St Paul to expect a resurrection of the dead both *of the just and of the unjust*, Acts xxiv. 15. And nothing could come in more seasonably here, for under Antiochus's persecution, some basely betrayed their religion, others bravely adhered to it. Now it would be a trouble to them, that when the storm was over, they could neither reward the one, nor punish the other; this therefore would be a satisfaction to them, that they would both be recompensed according to their works in the resurrection. And the apostle speaking of the pious Jews that suffered martyrdom under Antiochus, tells us, that tho' they were tortured, yet they *accepted not deliverance*, because they *hoped to obtain this better resurrection*, Heb. xi. 35.

5. There shall be a glorious reward conferred on those, that in the day of trouble and distress, being themselves *wise*, did *instruct many*. Such were taken particular notice of in the prophecy of the persecution, chap. xi. 33. that they should do eminent service, and yet should *fall by the sword and by flame*; now if there were not another life after this, they would be *of all men most miserable*, and therefore we are here assured, that they shall be recompensed *in the resurrection of the just*, ver. 3. *They that be wise*, that be *teachers*, so some read it, for teachers have need of wisdom, and they that have wisdom themselves should communicate it to others; they *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament*, shall shine in glory, heavenly glory, the glory of the upper world: and they that by the wisdom they have, and the instructions they give, are instrumental to turn any, especially to turn many to *righteousness*, shall shine *as the stars for ever and ever*. Note, 1. There is a glory reserved for all the saints in the future state, for all that are *wise*, *wise* for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now *makes his face to shine*, Eccl. viii. 1. But much more in that state where its power shall be perfected, and its services rewarded. 2. The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world. They that turn *men to righteousness*, that *turn sinners from the errors of their ways*, and help to *save their souls from death*, (Jam. v. 6.) will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own glory. 3. Ministers of Christ that have obtained mercy of him to be faithful and successful, and so are made *burning and shining lights* in this world, shall shine very bright in the other world; shall shine *as the stars*: Christ is the *sun*, the fountain of the lights, both of grace and glory; ministers as stars shine in both, with a light derived from him, and a *diminutive* light in comparison of him; yet to them that are *earthen vessels*, it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall *shine as the stars* of different magnitudes, some in lesser, others in greater lustre; but whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven, as leaves in autumn, these stars shall *shine for ever and ever*, shall never set, never be eclipsed.

6. That this prophecy of those times, tho' sealed up now, would be of great use to them that should live then, ver. 4. Daniel must now *shut up the words*, and *seal the book*; because the time would be long e'er these things were accomplished: and that was some comfort, that the Jewish nation, tho' in the infancy of their return from Babylon, while they were few and weak, they met with obstructions in their work, yet they were not persecuted for their religion, till a long time after, when they were grown to some strength and maturity. He must *seal the book* because it would not be *understood*, and therefore would not be regarded, till the things contained in it were accomplished; but he must keep it safe as a treasure of great value laid up for the ages to come; to whom it would be of great service, for *many shall then run to and fro, and knowledge*

shall be increased. Then this hid treasure shall be opened, and many shall *search* into it, and *dig* for the knowledge of it *as for silver*. They shall *run to and fro* to enquire out copies of it, shall collate them, and see that they be true and authentick; they shall read it over and over, shall meditate upon it, and run it over in their minds; *discurrent*, they shall *discourse* of it, and talk it over among themselves; and compare notes about it, if by any means they may *sift out* the meaning of it; and thus *knowledge shall be increased*: by consulting this prophecy on this occasion, they shall be led to *search* other *scriptures*, which shall contribute much to their advancement in useful knowledge; for *then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, Hos. vi. 3. Those that would have their knowledge increased must take pains; must not sit still in slothfulness, and bare wishes; but *run to and fro*, must make use of all the means of knowledge, and improve all opportunities of getting their mistakes rectified, their doubts resolved, and their acquaintance with the things of God improved; to know *more*, and to know *better* what they do know. And let us here see reason to hope, That, (1.) Those things of God which are now dark and obscure, will hereafter be made clear and easy to be understood. *Truth is the daughter of time*. Scripture prophecies will be expounded by the accomplishment of them; and therefore they are given, and for that explication they are reserved. Therefore they are *told us before*, that *when they do come to pass* we may believe. (2.) Those things of God which are despised and neglected, and thrown by as useless, shall be brought into *reputation*; shall be found to be of great service, and be brought into request; for divine revelation, however, slighted for a time, shall be *magnified and made honourable*, and above all, in the *judgment of the great day*, when the books shall be opened, and that book among the rest.

5. ¶ Then I Daniel looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6. And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7. And I heard the man clothed in linen, which *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand, and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and an half: and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished. 8. And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these *things*? 9. And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up, and sealed till the time of the end. 10. Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. 11. And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, *there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. 13. But go thou thy way till the end *be*: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

Daniel had been made to foresee the amazing revolutions of states and kingdoms, as far as the Israel of God was concerned in them; in them he foresaw troublous times to the church, suffering, trying, times, the prospect of which much affected him, and filled him with concern: now there were two questions proper to be asked upon this head; *When shall the end be?* And *what shall the end be?* These two questions are asked and answered here in the close of the book; and tho' the comforts prescribed in the foregoing verses, one would think, were satisfactory enough, yet for more abundant satisfaction this is added.

1. The question, *When the end shall be?* is asked by an angel, ver. 5, 6. And concerning this we may observe,

1. Who it was that asked the question. Daniel had had a vision of Christ in his glory, the *man clothed in linen*, chap. x. 5. But his discourse had been with the angel Gabriel, and now he *looks and behold other two*, ver. 5. Two angels, that he had not seen before; *one upon the bank of the river on one side, and the other on the other side*, that the river being between them, they might not whisper to one another, but what they said might be heard. Christ stood *on the waters of the river*, ver. 6. *between the banks of Ulai*, it was therefore proper that the angels his attendants should stand on either bank, that they might be ready to go one way, and the other the other way, as he should order them. These angels appeared, (1.) To *adorn the vision*, and make it the more illustrious; and to add to the glory of the son of man, Heb. i. 6. Daniel had not seen them before, tho' it is probable they were there, but now when they began to speak he looked

looked up and saw them. Note, The further we look into the things of God, and the more we converse with them, the more we shall see of those things, and still new discoveries will be made us; they that know *much*, if they improve it, shall know *more*. (2.) To confirm the discovery, that *out of the mouth of two or three witnesses*, the word might be established. Three angels appeared to Abraham. (3.) To inform themselves to hear and ask questions; for the mysteries of God's kingdom are things which the *angels desire to look into*, 1 Pet. i. 12. and they are *known to the church*, Eph. iii. 10. Now one of these two angels said, *When shall the end be?* Perhaps they both asked, first one, and then the other, but Daniel heard only one.

2. To whom this question was put; to the *man clothed in linen*, of whom we read before, chap. x. 5. To Christ our great high-priest, *who was upon the waters of the river*, and whose spokesman or interpreter the angel Gabriel had all this while been. This river was Hiddekel, chap. x. 4. the same with Tigris, the place whereabout many of the events prophesied of would happen: there therefore is the scene laid. Hiddekel was mentioned as one of the rivers that watered the garden of Eden, Gen. ii. 14. fitly therefore doth Christ stand upon that river, for by him the trees in the paradise of God are watered. *Waters signify people*, and so his standing upon the waters notes his dominion over all; he *sits upon the flood*, Psal. xxix. 10. He *treads upon the waters of the sea*, Job ix. 8. And Christ, to shew that this was he, in the days of the flesh, *walked upon the waters*, Mat. xiv. 25. He was *above the waters of the river*, so some read it; he appeared in the air over the river.

3. What the question was. *How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?* Daniel would not ask the question, because he would not pry into what was hidden, nor seem inquisitive concerning the times and the seasons, which the Father has put in his own power, Acts i. 7. But that he might have the satisfaction of the answer, the angel put the question in his hearing. Our Lord Jesus sometimes answered the questions which his disciples were afraid, or ashamed to ask, John xvi. 19. The angel asked as one concerned, *How long shall it be?* What, is the time prefixed in the divine counsels for the *end of these wonders?* i. e. these suffering trying times, that are to pass over the people of God. Note, 1. The troubles of the church are the *wonder* of angels. They admire that God will suffer his church to be thus afflicted, and yet what good he will do his church by its afflictions. 2. Good angels know no more of things to come than God is pleased to discover to them, much less do evil angels. 3. The holy angels in heaven are concerned for the church on earth, and lay to heart its afflictions, how much more then should we, who are more immediately related to it, and have so much of our peace in its peace? 4. What answer was returned to it, by him who is indeed the *numberer of secrets*, and knows things to come.

1. Here is a more general account given of the continuance of these troubles to the angel, that made the enquiry, ver. 7. that they shall continue *for a time, times, and a half*, i. e. a year, two years, and half a year, as was before intimated, chap. vii. 25. but the one half of a prophetic week; some understand it indefinitely, a certain time for an uncertain; it shall be *for a time*, i. e. a considerable time, for *times*, a longer time yet, double to what it was thought at first it would be; and yet indeed it shall be but *half a time*; or, a part of a time; when it is over, it shall seem not *half* so much as was feared. But it is rather to be taken for a certain time; we meet with it in the Revelation, under the title sometimes of three days and a half put for three years and a half; sometimes forty-two months, sometimes twelve hundred and sixty days. Now this determination of the time is here, (1.) Confirmed by an oath. The man clothed in linen lift up both his hands to heaven and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, that it shall be so. Thus the mighty angel whom St John saw is brought in, with a plain reference to this vision here, standing with his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and with his hand lift up to heaven, swearing that *there shall be no longer delay*, Rev. x. 5, 6. This mighty one that Daniel saw, stood with both feet on the water, and swore with both hands lifted up. Note, An oath is of use for confirmation; God only is to be sworn by, for he is the proper judge to whom we are to appeal; and lifting up the hand is a very proper and significant sign to be used in a solemn oath. (2.) It is illustrated with a reason; God will suffer him to prevail till he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people. God will suffer him to do his worst, and run his utmost length, and then *all these things shall be finished*. Note, God's time to succour and relieve his people, is when their affairs are brought to the last extremity; *in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen*, that Isaac is saved just then when he lies ready to be sacrificed. Now the event answered the prediction; Josephus saith expressly, in his book of the wars of the Jews, that Antiochus, surnamed Epiphanes, surprised Jerusalem by force, and held it three years and six months, and is then cast out of the country by the Asmoneans or Maccabees. Christ's publick ministry continued three years and a half, during which time he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, and lived in poverty and disgrace, and then when his power seemed to be quite scattered at his death, and his enemies triumphed over him, he obtained the most glorious victory, and said, *It is finished*.

2. Here is something added more particularly concerning the time of the continuance of those troubles, in what is said to Daniel, ver. 11, 12. Where we have, (1.) The event fixed from which the time of the trouble is to be dated; from the *taking away of the daily sacrifice* by Antiochus, and the *setting up of the image of Jupiter* upon the altar, which was the *abomination of desolation*. Then they must reckon their troubles to begin indeed when they were deprived of the benefit of publick ordinances; that was to them the *beginning of sorrows*, that was it they laid most to heart. (2.) The continuance of their trouble; it shall last twelve hundred and ninety days; *three years and seven months*; or as some reckon *three years six months and fifteen days*; and then it is probable the daily sacrifice was restored, and the abomination of desolation taken away, in remembrance of which, the *feast of dedication* was observed even to our Saviour's time, John x. 22. Though it do not appear by the history, that it was exactly so long to a day, yet it appears, that the beginning of the trouble was in the one hundred and forty-fifth year of the Seleucidæ, and the end of it in the one hundred and forty-eighth year; and either the restoring of the sacrifice, and the taking away of the image, was just so many days after, or some other previous event that was remarkable, which is not recorded. There are many particular times fixed in the scripture prophecies, which it doth not appear by any history, sacred or profane, that the event answered, and yet, no doubt, it did punctually; as Isa. xvi. 14. (3.) The completing of their deliverance, or at least a further advance towards it; which is here set forty-five days after the former, and some think points at the death of Antiochus, thirteen hundred and thirty-five days after his profaning the temple. *Blessed is he that waits and comes to that time*. It is said 1 Mac. vi. 16. that Antiochus died in the one hundred and forty-ninth year of the kingdom of the Greeks, and 2 Mac. ix. 28.—x. 1. that the Maccabees under a divine conduct recovered the temple and the city. Many good interpreters make these to be prophetic days, i. e. so many years; and date them from the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; but what events they then fall upon they are not agreed. Others date them from the corruption of the gospel worship by the Antichrist; whose reign is confined in the Apocalypse to twelve hundred and sixty days, i. e. years, at the end of which he shall begin to fall; but thirty years after he shall be quite fallen, at the end of twelve hundred and ninety days; and whoever lives forty years longer to thirteen hundred and thirty-five days will see glorious times indeed. Whether it looks so far forwards or no I cannot tell, but this, however, we may learn, (1.) That there is a time fixed for the period of the church's troubles, and the bringing about of her deliverance, and this time will be punctually observed to a day. (2.) That this time must be *waited for*, with faith and patience. (3.) That when it comes it will abundantly recompense us for our long expectations of it. *Blessed is he that having waited long comes to it at last, for he will then have reason to say, Lo, this is our God, and we have waited for him*.

2. The question, *What the end shall be?* is asked by Daniel, and an answer given to it. Observe,

1. Why Daniel asked this question; it was because, though he heard what was said to the angel, yet he did not understand it, ver. 8. Daniel was a very intelligent man, and had been conversant in visions and prophecies, and yet here he was puzzled; he did not understand the meaning of the *time, times, and the part of a time*, at least not so clearly, and with so much certainty as he wished. Note, The best men are often much at a loss in their enquiries concerning divine things, and meet with that which they do not understand. But the better they are, the more sensible they are of their own weakness and ignorance, and the more ready to acknowledge it.

2. What the question was, *O my Lord, What shall be the end of these things?* He directs his enquiry not to the angel that talked with him, but immediately to Christ, for to whom else should we go with our enquiries? What shall be the final issue of these events? What do they tend to? What will they end in? Note, When we take a view of the affairs of this world, and of the church of God in it, we cannot but think, what will be the end of these things? We see things move as if they would end in the utter ruin of God's kingdom among men; when we observe the prevalency of vice and impiety, the decay of religion, the sufferings of the righteous, and the triumphs of the ungodly over them, we may well ask, *O my Lord, What will be the end of these things?* But this may satisfy us in general, That all will end well at last. Great is the truth, and will prevail at long run. All opposing rule, principality, and power will be put down, and holiness and love will triumph, and be in honour to eternity. The end, this end, will come.

2. What answer is returned to this question. Besides what refers to the time, ver. 11, 12. of which before, here are some general instructions given to Daniel, with which he is dismissed from further attendance.

1. He must content himself with the discoveries that had been made to him, and not enquire any further. *Go thy way, Daniel; let it suffice thee that thou hast been admitted thus far to the foresight of things to come, but stop here. Go thy way about the king's business again; chap. viii. 27. Go thy way and record what thou hast seen and heard for the benefit of posterity, and*

covet not to see and hear more at present. Note, Communion with God is not our *continual feast* in this world; we sometimes are taken to be witnesses of Christ's glory, and we say, *It is good to be here*; but we must go down from the mount, and have there no continuing city. Those that know much *know but in part*, and still see there is a great deal that they are kept in the dark about, and are likely to be so till the veil is rent; hitherto their knowledge shall go, but no farther; *Go thy way, Daniel*, satisfied with what thou hast.

2. He must not expect that what had been said to him would be fully understood till it was accomplished. *The words are closed up and sealed*, are involved in perplexities, and are likely to be so till the time of the end, till the end of these things; nay, till the end of all things. Daniel was ordered to *seal the book to the time of the end*, ver. 4. The Jews use to say, *When Elias cometh, he will tell us all things*. They are *closed up and sealed*, i. e. The discovery designed to be made by them is now fully settled and compleated; nothing is to be added to it, or taken from it, for it is *closed up and sealed*; ask not therefore after more; *Nescire velle quæ Magister Maximus docere non vult erudita inscitia est*.

3. He must count upon no other, but that as long as the world stands, there will still be such a mixture as now we see there is of good and bad in it, ver. 10. We long to see all wheat and no tares in God's field, all corn and no chaff in God's floor, but it will not be till the time of ingathering, till the winnowing day comes; both must *grow together until the harvest*. As it has been, so it is and will be, *the wicked shall do wickedly*, but *the wise shall understand*. In this, as in other things, St John's revelation closeth as Daniel did, Rev. xxii. 11. *He which is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he which is holy, let him be holy still*.

1. There is no remedy, but that *wicked people will do wickedly*; and such people there are and will be in the world to the end of time. So said the proverb of the ancients, *wickedness proceedeth from the wicked*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 13. and the observation of the moderns saith the same: Ill men will do ill things; and a *corrupt tree will never bring forth good fruit*; do men gather grapes off thorns? Or bring forth good things from an evil treasure in the heart? No, wicked practices are the natural products of wicked principles and dispositions. Marvel not at the matter then, Eccl. v. 8. We are told before, that the *wicked will do wickedly*, we can expect no better from them; but, which is worse, *none of the wicked shall understand*. This is either (1.) a part of their sin; they will not understand, they shut their eyes against the light, and none so blind as they that will not see. Therefore they are *wicked*, because they will not understand. If they did but rightly know the truths of God, they would readily obey the laws of God, Psal. lxxxii. 5. wilful sin is the effect of willing ignorance; therefore they will not understand, because they are wicked; therefore they hate the light, and come not to the light, because their deeds are evil, John iii. 19. Or, (2.) It is a part of their punishment; they will do wickedly, and therefore God hath given them up to *blindness of mind*; and has said concerning them *they shall not understand*, nor be converted and healed, Matth. xiii. 14, 15. God will not give them eyes to see, because they will do wickedly, Deut. xxix. 4.

2. Yet, as bad as the world is, God will secure to himself a remnant of good people in it; still there shall be some, there shall be many, to whom the providences and ordinances of God shall be a favour of life unto life, while to others they are a favour of death unto death.

(1.) The providences of God shall do them good; *many shall be purified, and made white, and tried* by their troubles, (compare chap. xi. 35.) by the same troubles, which will but stir up the corruptions of the wicked, and make them do more wickedly. Note, The afflictions of good people are designed for their trial; but by these trials they are *purified and made white*; their corruptions are purged out, their graces are brightened, and made both more vigorous and more conspicuous, and are *found to praise, and honour, and glory*, 1 Pet. i. 7. Those that are themselves sanctified and good, to them every event is sanctified, and works for good, and helps to make them better.

(2.) The word of God shall do them good. When the *wicked understand not*, but stumble at the word, the *wise shall understand*. Those that are *wise* in practice, shall *understand doctrine*, that are influenced and governed by the divine law and love, shall be illuminated with a divine light. For if any man will *do his will*, he shall *know the truth*, John vii. 17. *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser*.

4. He must comfort himself with the pleasing prospect of his own happiness in death, in judgment, and to eternity, ver. 13. Daniel was now very old, and had been long engaged both in an intimate acquaintance with heaven, and a great deal of publick business on this earth. And now he must think of bidding farewell to this present state; *Go thou thy way till the end be*. (1.) It is good for us all to think much of *going away* from this world, we are still *going*, and must be *gone* shortly, gone the way of all the earth: That must be our way; but this is our comfort, we shall not go till God calls for us to another world, and till he has done with us in this world, till he saith, *Go thou thy way*, thou hast finished thy testimony, done thy work, and accomplished as a hireling thy day. Therefore now, *Go thou thy way*, and leave it to others to take thy room. (2.) When a good man goes his way from this world, he enters into rest; *thou shalt rest* from all thy present toils and toffes; and shalt not see the evils that are coming on the next generation. Never could a child of God say more pertinently than in his dying moments, *Return unto thy rest, O my soul*. (3.) Time and days will have an end; not only our time and days will end very shortly, but all times and days will have an end at length; yet a little while, and time shall be no more; but all its revolutions will be numbred and finished. (4.) Our rest in the grave will be but till the end of the days; and then the *peaceful rest* will be happily disturbed by a *joyful resurrection*: Job foresaw this when he said of the dead, that *till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep*, implying that then they shall, Job xiv. 12. (4.) We must every one of us stand in our lot at the end of the days. In the judgment of the great day, we must have our allotment according to what we were, and what we did in the body, either *Come, ye blessed*, or *go, ye cursed*, and we must stand for ever in that lot. It was a comfort to Daniel, it is a comfort to all the saints that whatever their lot is in the days of time, they shall have a happy lot in the end of the days, shall have their lot among the chosen. And it ought to be the great care and concern of every one of us to secure a happy lot at last in the end of the days, and then we may well be content with our present lot, welcome the will of God. (6.) A believing hope and prospect of a blessed lot in the heavenly Canaan, at the end of the days will be an effectual support to us when we are going our way out of this world, and will furnish us with living comforts in dying moments.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f H O S E A.

WE have now before us, (1.) The twelve minor prophets; which some of the ancients in reckoning up the books of the Old Testament put all together, and reckon but as one book. They are called the lesser prophets, not because their writings are of any less authority, or usefulness, than those of the greater prophets, or as if these prophets were less in God's account, or might be so in ours than the other, but only because they are shorter, and less in bulk than the other. We have reason to think that these prophets preached as much as the other, but they did not write so much, nor is so much of their preaching kept upon record. Many excellent prophets wrote nothing, and others but little, who yet were very useful in their day. And so in the Christian church there have been many burning and shining lights, who are not known to posterity by their writings, and yet were no way inferior in gifts and graces, and serviceableness to their own generation, than those that are; and some that have left but little behind them, and make no great figure among authors, yet were as valuable men as the more voluminous writers. These twelve small prophets, Josephus saith, were put into one volume by the men of the great synagogue in Ezra's time, of which learned and pious body of men the three last of these twelve prophets are supposed to have been themselves members. These are what remained of the scattered pieces of inspired writing. Antiquaries value the fragmenta veterum; these are the fragments of prophecy, which are carefully gathered up by the divine providence and the care of the church, that nothing might be lost; as St Paul's short epistles, after his long ones. The son of Sirach speaks of these twelve prophets with honour, as men that strengthened Jacob, Ecclus. xlix. 10. Nine of these prophets prophesied before the captivity, and the three last after the return of the Jews to their own land. Some difference there is in the order of these books. We place them as the ancient Hebrew did; and all agree to put Hosea first; but the ancient Septuagint place the six first in this order, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, and Jonah; the thing is not material. And if we covet to place them according to their seniority, as to some of them we shall find no certainty. (2.) We have before us the prophecy of Hosea, who was the first of all the writing prophets, somewhat before Isaiah. The ancients say he was of Beth-Shemesh, and of the tribe of Issachar. He continued very long a prophet; the Jews reckoned he prophesied near fourscore and ten years; so that as Jerom observes, he prophesied of the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes when it was at a great distance, and lived himself to see and lament it, and to improve it when it was over, for warning to its sister-kingdom. The scope of his prophecy is to discover sin, and to denounce the judgments of God against a people that would not be reformed. The style is very concise and sententious, above any of the prophets; and in some places it seems to be like the book of proverbs, without connexion, and rather to be called Hosea's sayings, than Hosea's sermons. And a weighty adage may sometimes do more service than a laboured discourse. Huetius observes, that many passages in the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel seem to refer to, and to be borrowed from, the prophet Hosea, who wrote a good while before them. As Jer. vii. 34.—xvi. 9—xxv. 10. and Ezek. xxvi. 13. speak the same with Hos. ii. 11. so Ezek. xvi. 16, &c. is taken from Hos. ii. 8. And that promise of serving the Lord their God, and David their king, Jer. xxx. 8, 9. Ezek. xxxiv. 23. Hosea had before, chap. iii. 5. And Ezek. xix. 12. is taken from Hos. xiii. 15. Thus one prophet confirms and corroborates another; and all these worketh that one and the self same Spirit.

C H A P. I.

The mind of God is revealed to his prophet, and by him to the people, in the three first chapters by signs and types; but afterwards only by discourse. In this chapter we have, (1.) The general title of the whole book, ver. 1. (2.) Some particular instructions he was ordered to give to the people of God. (1.) He must convince them of their sin in going a whoring from God, by marrying a wife of whoredoms, ver. 2, 3. (2.) He must foretel the ruin coming upon them for their sin in the names of his sons, which signified God's disowning and abandoning them, ver. 4, 5, 6, 8, 9. (3.) He must speak comfortably to the kingdom of Judah, which still retained the pure worship of God, and assure them of the salvation of the Lord, ver. 7. (4.) He must give an intimation of the great mercy God had in store both for Israel and Judah, in the latter days, ver. 10, 11. for in this prophecy many precious promises of mercy are mixed with the threatnings of wrath.

THE word of the LORD that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel.

Here is, (1.) The prophet's name and surname, which he himself, as the other prophets, prefixeth to his prophecy, for the satisfaction of all, that he is ready to attest what he writes to be of God; he sets his hand to it, as that which he will stand by. His name, Hosea, or Hoshea, for it is the very same with Joshua's original name, signifies a saviour, for prophets were instruments of salvation to the people of God, so are faithful ministers, they help to save many a soul from death, by saving it from sin. His surname was Ben-Beeri, or the son of Beeri; as with us now, so with them then, some had their surname from their place, as Micah the Morashite, Nahum the Elkoshite. Others from their parents, as Joel the son of Bethuel, and here Hosea the son of Beeri. And perhaps they made use of that distinction when the eminency of their parents was such as would derive honour upon them; but it is a groundless conceit of the Jews, that where a prophet's father is named, he also was a prophet. Beeri signifies a well, which may put us in mind of the fountain of life and living waters from which prophets are drawn, and must be continually drawing.

(2.) Here is his authority and commission. *The word of the Lord came to him. It was to him; it came with power and efficacy to him; it was revealed to him as a real thing, and not a fancy or imagination of his own; in some such way as God then discovered himself to his servants the prophets. What he said and wrote, was by divine inspiration; it was by the word of the Lord, as St Paul speaks concerning that which he had purely by revelation, 1 Thess. iv. 15. Therefore this book was always received among the canonical books of the Old Testament, which is confirmed by what is quoted out of it in the New Testament, Matth. ii. 15.—ix. 13.—xii. 7. Rom. ix. 25, 26. 1 Pet. ii. 10. For the word of the Lord endures for ever.*

(3.) Here is a particular account of the times in which he prophesied. *In the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah; and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.* We have only this general date of his prophecy, and not the date of any particular part of it, as before in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel; and afterwards in Haggai, and Zechariah. Here is only one king of Israel named, though there were many more within this time, because having mentioned the kings of Judah, there was no necessity of naming the other; and they being all wicked, he took no pleasure in naming them, nor would do them the honour. Now by this account here given of the several reigns in which Hosea prophesied, (and it should seem the word of the Lord still came to him more or less, at times, throughout all these reigns) it appears,

1. That he prophesied a long time; that he began when he was *very young*, which gave him the advantage of strength and sprightliness; and that he continued at his work till he was *very old*, which gave him the advantage of experience and authority. It was a great honour to him to be thus long employed in such good work, and a great mercy to the people to have a minister so long among them that so well knew their state, and naturally cared for it; one they had been long used to, and therefore was the more likely to be *useful to them*. And yet for ought appears, he did but little good among them; the longer they enjoyed him, the less they regarded him; they despised his youth first, and afterwards his age.

2. That he passed through variety of conditions. Some of these kings were very good, and, it is likely, countenanced and encouraged him; others very bad, who (we may suppose) frowned upon him and discouraged him; and yet he was still the same. God's ministers must expect to pass through *honour and dishonour, evil report and good report*, and must resolve in both to hold fast their integrity, and keep close to their work.

3. That he began to prophesy at a time when the judgments of God were abroad, when God was himself contending in a more immediate way with that sinful people, who fell into the hands of the Lord, before they were turned over into the hands of man; for in the days of Uzziah, and of Jeroboam, his contemporary, the dreadful earthquake was, mentioned Zech. xiv. 5. and Amos i. 1. And then was the plague of locusts, Joel i. 2, 3. Amos vii. 1. Hos. iv. 3. The rod of God is sent to enforce the word, and the word of God is sent to explain the rod, yet neither prevail till God by his Spirit opens the ear to instruction and discipline.

4. That he began to prophesy in Israel at a time when their kingdom was in a flourishing prosperous condition, for so it was in the reign of Jeroboam the second, as we find 2 Kings xiv. 25. *He restored the coast of Israel, and God saved them by his hand*; yet then Hosea boldly tells them of their sins, and foretels their destruction. Men are not to be flattered in their sinful ways because they prosper in the world, but even then must be faithfully reproved, and plainly told, that their prosperity will not be their security, nor will it last long if they go on still in their trespasses.

2. The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea: and the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD. 3. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, which conceived and bare him a son. 4. And the LORD said unto him Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. 5. And it shall come to pass at that day, that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel. 6. ¶ And she conceived again, and bare a daughter; and God said unto him, Call her name Lo-ruhamah: for I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel; but I will utterly take them away. 7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by the LORD their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen.

These words, *The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea* may refer either, (1.) To that glorious set of prophets which was raised up about this time. At this time there lived and prophesied Joel, Amos, Micah, Jonah, Obadiah, and Isaiah; but Hosea was the first of them that foretold the destruction of Israel; the *beginning of this word of the Lord was by him*. We read in the history of this Jeroboam here named, 2 Kings xiv. 27. that *the Lord had not yet said*, he would blot out the name of Israel, but soon after he said he would, and Hosea was the man that began to say it; which made it so much the harder task to him, to be the first that should carry an *unpleasing* message, and some time before any were raised up to second him. Or rather, (2.) To Hosea's own prophecies. This was the *first* message God sent him upon to this people, to tell them that they were *an evil, and an adulterous generation*. He might have desired to be excused from dealing so roughly with them, till he had gained authority and reputation: and some interest in their affections: No, he must begin with this, that they might know what to expect from a prophet of the Lord. Nay, he must not only *preach* this to them, but he must *write* it, and *publish* it, and leave it upon record, as a witness against them. Now here,

1. The prophet must, as it were in a *looking-glass*, shew them *their sin*; and shew it them to be exceeding sinful, exceeding hateful. The prophet is ordered to *take unto him a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms*, ver. 3. And he did so, ver. 4. He married a woman of ill fame, *Gomer the daughter of Diblaim*; not one that had been married and had committed adultery, for then she must have been put to death, but one that had lived scandalously in the single state. To marry such a one was not *malum in se*, but only *malum per accidens*, not prudent, decent, or expedient, and therefore forbidden to the priests, and which if it were really done would be an affliction to the prophet; it is threatned as a curse on Amaziah that his wife should be a *harlot*, Amos vii. 16. but not a sin when God commanded it for an holy end; nay, if commanded, it was his duty, and he must trust God with his reputation. But most think it was done *in vision*, or that it is no more but a parable; and that was a way of teaching commonly used among the ancients, particularly his prophets; what

what they meant of others they transferred to themselves in a figure, as St Paul speaks 1 Cor. iv. 6. He must take a wife of whoredoms, and have such children by her as every one would suspect, though born in wedlock, to be children of whoredoms, begotten in adultery; because it is too common for those that have lived lewdly in the single state, to live no better in the married state. Now (saith God) Hosea, This people is to thee such a dishonour, and such a grief and vexation, as a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms would be to thee. For the land has committed great whoredoms. In all instances of wickedness they had departed from the Lord; but their idolatry especially is the whoredom they are here charged with. Giving that glory to any creature which is due to God alone, is such an injury and affront to God, as for a wife to embrace the bosom of a stranger, is to her husband. It is especially so in those that have made a profession of religion, and have been taken into covenant with God; it is breaking the marriage-bond, it is a heinous, odious sin, and, as much as any other, besets the mind, and takes away the heart. Idolatry is great whoredom, worse than any other; it is departing from the Lord, to whom we lie under greater obligations than any wife doth or can do to a husband. The land has committed whoredom; it is not here and there a particular person that is guilty of idolatry, but the whole land is polluted with it; the sin is become national, the disease epidemical. What an odious thing would it be for the prophet, a holy man, to have a whorish wife, and children whorish like her? What an exercise would it be of his patience, and if she persisted in it, what other could be expected, but that he should give her a bill of divorce? And is it not then much more offensive to the holy God, to have such a people as this to be called by his name, and have a place in his house; how great is his patience with them! and how justly may he cast them off! It was as if he should have married Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, who probably was at that time a noted harlot. The land of Israel was like Gomer the daughter of Diblaim; Gomer signifies corruption; Diblaim signifies two cakes or lumps of figs; this notes that Israel was near to ruin, and that their luxury and sensuality, was the cause of it. They were as the evil figs that could not be eaten they were so evil. It speaks sin the daughter of plenty, and destruction the daughter of the abuse of plenty. Some give this sense of the command here given to the prophet, Go, take thee a wife of whoredoms, for if thou shouldst go to seek for an honest modest woman, thou wouldst not find any such, for the whole land and all the people of it is given to whoredom; the usual concomitant of idolatry.

2. The prophet must, as it were through a perspective glass, shew them their ruin; and this he doth in the names given to the children born of this adulteress; for as lust when it has conceived bringeth forth sin, so sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

1. He foretels the fall of the royal family in the name he is appointed to give to his first child, which was a son; call his name Jezreel, ver. 4. We find that the prophet Isaiah gave prophetic names to his children, Isa. vii. 3.—viii. 3. so this prophet here. Jezreel signifies the seed of God; so they should have been, but it signifies also, the scattered of God, they shall be as sheep on the mountains that have no shepherd. Call them not Israel, which signifies dominion, they have lost all the honour of that name; but call them Jezreel, which signifies dispersion, for they that have departed from the Lord will wander endlessly. Hitherto they have been scattered as seed; let them now be scattered as chaff. Jezreel was the name of one of the royal seats of the kings of Israel; it was a beautiful city, seated in a pleasant valley, and it is with allusion to that city, that this child is called Jezreel, for yet a little while and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu. Observe here,

1. Who is it that God has a controversy with; it is the house of Jehu, from whom the present king, Jeroboam, was lineally descended. The house of Jehu smarted for the sins of Jehu, for God often lays up mens iniquity for their children, and visits it upon them. It is the kingdom of the house of Israel, which may be meant either of the present royal family, that of Jehu, which God did presently cause to cease, for the son of this Jeroboam, Zechariah, reigned but six months, and he was the last of Jehu's race; or of the whole kingdom in general, which continued corrupt and wicked, and which was made to cease, in the reign of Hoshea about seventy years after; and with God that is but a little while. Note, Neither the pomp of kings, nor the power of kingdoms, can secure them from God's destroying judgments, if they continue to rebel against him.

2. What is the ground of this controversy. I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, i. e. the blood which Jehu shed at Jezreel, when by commission from God, and in obedience to his command, he utterly destroyed the house of Ahab, and all that were in alliance with it, with all the worshippers of Baal; God approved of what he did, 2 Kings x. 30. thou hast done well in executing that which was right in mine eyes; and yet here God will avenge that blood upon the house of Jehu, when the time is expired during which it was promised his family should reign, even to the fourth generation. But how comes the same action to be both rewarded and punished? Very justly; the matter of it was good; it was the execution of a righteous sentence passed upon the house of Ahab, and as such it was rewarded; but Jehu did it not

in a right manner; he aimed at his own advancement, not at the glory of God, and mingled his own resentments, with the execution of God's justice. He did it with a malice against the sinners, but not with any antipathy to the sin; for he kept up the worship of the golden calves, and took no heed to walk in the law of God, 2 Kings x. 31. And therefore when the measure of the iniquity of his house was full, and God came to reckon with them, the first article in the account is (and being first, it is put for all the rest) for the blood of the house of Ahab, here called the blood of Jezreel. Thus when the house of Baasha was rooted out, it was because he did like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed him, 1 Kings xvi. 7. Note, Those that are intrusted with the administration of justice, are concerned to see to it, that they do it from a right principle, and with a right intention, and that they do not themselves live in those sins which they punish in others, lest even their just executions should be reckoned for, another day, as little less than murders.

3. How far the controversy shall proceed; it shall be not a correction, but a destruction. Some make those words, I will visit or appoint the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, to signify, not as we read it, the revenging of that bloodshed, but the repeating of that bloodshed; I will punish the house of Jehu, as I punished the house of Ahab, because Jehu did not take warning by the punishment of his predecessors, but trod in the steps of their idolatry. And after the house of Jehu is destroyed, I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel, i. e. I will begin to bring it down, tho' now it flourish. After the death of Zechariah, the last of the house of Jehu, the kingdom of the ten tribes went to decay and dwindled sensibly. And in order to the ruin of it; it is threatned, ver. 5. I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel; the strength of the warriors of Israel, so the Chaldee. God will disable them either to defend themselves or to resist their enemies. As the bow abiding in strength and being renewed in the hand speaks a growing power, so the breaking of the bow speaks a sinking ruined power. The bow shall be broken in the valley of Jezreel, where probably the armoury was; or it may be, in that valley some battle was fought, wherein the kingdom of Israel was very much weakened. Note, There is no fence against God's controversy; when he comes forth against a people, their strong bows are soon broken, and their strong holds broken down. In the valley of Jezreel they shed that blood which the righteous God would in that very place avenge upon them; as some notorious malefactors are hanged in chains there where the villainy they suffer for was perpetrated; that the punishment may answer the sin.

2. He foretels God's abandoning the whole nation in the name he gives to the second child. It was a daughter as the former was a son, to intimate that both sons and daughters had corrupted their way. Some make it to signify, that Israel grew effeminate, and was thereby enfeebled and made weak. Call the name of this daughter Lo-Ruhamah, i. e. not beloved, so it is translated, Rom. ix. 25. or, not having obtained mercy, so it is translated, 1 Pet. ii. 10. it comes all to one. This reads the doom of the house of Israel, I will no more have mercy upon them. This intimates, that God had shewed them great mercy, but they had abused his favours, and forfeited them, and now he would shew them favour no more. Note, Those that forsake their own mercies for lying vanities, have reason to expect that their own mercies should forsake them, and that they should be left to their lying vanities, Jon. ii. 8. Sin turns away the mercy of God, even from the house of Israel, his own professing people, whose case is sad indeed, when God saith he will no more have mercy upon them. And then it follows, I will utterly take them away; will utterly remove them, so some, will utterly pluck them up, so others. Note, When the streams of mercy are stopped, we can expect no other but that the vials of wrath should be opened. Those whom God will no more have mercy upon, shall be utterly taken away, as dross and dung. The word for taking away sometimes signifies to forgive sin, and some take it in that sense here. I will no more have mercy upon them, though in pardoning I have pardoned them heretofore; tho' God has born long he will not bear always with a people that hate to be reformed. Or, I will no more have mercy upon them that I should in any wise pardon them; or, (as our margin reads it) that I should altogether pardon them. If pardoning mercy is denied, no other mercy can be expected, for that opens the door to all the rest. Some make this to speak comfort, I will no more have mercy upon them, till in pardoning I shall pardon them, i. e. till the Redeemer comes to Zion to turn away ungodliness from Jacob. The Chaldee reads it, but if they repent, in pardoning I will pardon them. Even the greatest sinners, if in time they bethink themselves and return, will find that there is forgiveness with God.

3. He must shew them what mercy God had in store for the house of Judah, at the same time that he was thus contending with the house of Israel, ver. 7. But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah. Note, Tho' some are justly cast off for their disobedience, yet God will always secure to himself a remnant that shall be the vessels and monuments of mercy. When divine justice is glorified in some, yet there are others in whom free grace is glorified. And tho' some thro' unbelief are broken off, yet God will have a church in this world till the end of time. It aggravates the rejection of Israel, that God will have mercy on Judah, and

and not on them, and magnifies God's mercy to Judah, that tho' they also had done wickedly, yet God did not reject them, as he rejected Israel. *I will have mercy upon them, and will save them.* Note, Our salvation is owing purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Now (1.) This without doubt refers to the temporal salvations which God wrought for Judah in a distinguishing way, the favours shewed to them and not to Israel. When the Assyrian armies had destroyed Samaria, and carried the ten tribes away into captivity, they proceeded to besiege Jerusalem, but God *had mercy* on the house of Judah, and saved them by the vast slaughter which an angel made in one night in the camp of the Assyrians; then they were *saved by the Lord their God* immediately, and not by sword or bow; when the ten tribes were continued in their captivity, and their land was possessed by others, when being *utterly taken away*, God *had mercy on the house of Judah*, and *saved them*, and after seventy years brought them back, *not by might or power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. iv. 6. *I will save them by the Lord their God*, i. e. by myself. God will be exalted in his own strength, will take the work into his hands: That salvation is *sure* which he undertakes to be the author of, for if he will work none shall hinder. And that salvation is most acceptable which he doth by himself. *So the Lord alone did lead him.* The less there is of man in any salvation and the more of God, the *brighter* it shines, and the *sweeter* it tastes. I will save them *in the word of the Lord*, so the Chaldee, for the sake of Christ, the eternal Word, and by his power. *I will save them not by bow nor by sword.* That is, (1.) They shall be saved when they are reduced to so low an ebb, that they have neither *bow nor sword* to defend themselves with, Judg. v. 8. 1 Sam. xiii. 22. (2.) They shall be *saved by the Lord* then when they are brought off from trusting to their own strength, and their weapons of war, Psal. xlv. 6. (3.) They shall be saved easily, without the trouble of *sword and bow*, Isa. ix. 5. *I will save them by the Lord their God*: In calling him *their God*, he upbraids the ten tribes who had *cast him off* from being *theirs*, for which reason he had *cast them off*, and intimates what was the true reason why he had mercy, distinguishing mercy, for the house of Judah, and saved them, it was in pursuance of his covenant with them as the *Lord their God*, and in recompence for their faithful adherence to him and to his word and worship. But (2.) This may refer also to the salvation of Judah from idolatry, which qualified and prepared them for their other salvations. And this is indeed a salvation *by the Lord their God*, it is wrought only by the power of his grace, and can never be wrought by *sword or bow*. Just at the time that the kingdom of Israel was *utterly taken away* under Hoshea, the kingdom of Judah was gloriously reformed under Hezekiah, and was therefore preserved; and in Babylon God saved them from their idolatry first, and then from their captivity. (3.) Some make this promise to look forward to the great salvation, which, in the fulness of time, was to be wrought out *by the Lord our God*, Jesus Christ, who came into the world to *save his people from their sins*.

8. ¶ Now when she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and bare a son. 9. Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye are not my people, and I will not be your God. 10. ¶ Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbred; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, *Ye are not my people*, there it shall be said unto them, *Ye are the sons of the living God*. 11. Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel.

We have here a prediction,

1. Of the *rejection* of Israel for a time, which is signified by the name of another child that Hosea had by his adulterous spouse, ver. 8, 9. And still we must observe, that those children whose names carried these direful omens in them to Israel were all *children of whoredoms*, ver. 2. all born of that harlot that Hosea married, to intimate, that the ruin of Israel was the natural product of the sin of Israel. If they had not first *revolted* from God, they had never been *rejected* by him; God never leaves any till they first leave him.

Here is, 1. The birth of this child. *When she had weaned her daughter, she conceived and bare a son.* Notice is taken of the delay of the birth of this child, which was to carry in its name a certain presage of their utter rejection to intimate God's patience with them, and his lothness to proceed to extremity. Some think her *bearing another son* signifies that peoples persisting in their wickedness, lust still *conceived*, and *brought forth sin*; they *added to do evil*, so the Chaldee paraphrase expounds it; they were *old* in adulteries, and *obstinate*.

2. The name given him. *Call him Lo-ammi*, i. e. *not my people*. When they were told that God would *no more have mercy on them*, they regarded it not, but buoyed up themselves with this

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conceit that they were God's *people*, whom he could not but *have mercy on*. And therefore here he plucks that staff from under them, and disowns all relation to them, *ye are not my people, and I will not be your God*. *I will not be yours*, so the word is; I will be in no relation to you, will have nothing to do with you; I will not be *your king, your father, your patron and protector*; we supply it very well with that which includes all, *I will not be your God*. *I will not be to you* what I have been, nor what you vainly expect I should be, nor what I would have been, if you had kept close to me. Observe, *You are not my people*, i. e. you do not carry it as becomes my people, you are not *observant* of me, and *obedient* to me as my people should be, you are not *my people*, but the people of this and the other dunghil deity, and therefore *I will not own you for my people*, will not protect you, will not put in any claim to you, not *demand* you, not *deliver* you out of the hands of those that have seized you; let them take you, you are none of mine; you will not have me to be *your God*, but pay your homage to the pretenders, and therefore *I will not be your God*; you shall have no interest in me, shall expect no benefit by me. Note, Our being taken into covenant with God, is owing purely to him and to his grace, for then it begins on his side, *I will be to them a God*, and then they shall be *to me a people*; *we love him, because he first loved us*; but our being cast out of covenant, is owing purely to ourselves and our own folly. The breach is on man's side; *you are not my people*, and therefore *I will not be your God*; if God *hate any*, it is because they *first hated him*. This was fulfilled in Israel when they were *utterly taken away*, into the land of Assyria, and their place knew them no more. They were no longer *God's people*, for they lost their knowledge and worship of him, no prophets were sent them, no promises made them as were to the two tribes in their captivity; nay, they were no longer *a people*, but for ought appears, were mingled with the nations into which they were carried, and lost among them.

2. Of the *reduction* and *restoration* of Israel in the fulness of time. Here, as before, mercy is remembered in the midst of wrath, the rejection as it shall not be *total*, so it shall not be *final*, ver. 10, 11. *yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea*. See how the same hand that wounded is stretched forth to heal, and how tenderly he that has *torn, binds up*; tho' God *cause grief* by his threatnings, yet *he will have compassion*, and will gather with everlasting kindness. They are very precious promises that are here made concerning the Israel of God, and which may be of use to us now.

1. Some think these promises had their accomplishment in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, when many of the ten tribes joined themselves to Judah, and took the benefit of the liberty which Cyrus proclaimed; came up in great numbers out of the several countries into which they were dispersed, to their own land, appointed Zerubbabel their head, and coalesced into one people, whereas before they had been two *distinct* nations. And in their own land, where God had by his prophets disowned and rejected them as none of his, he would by his prophets own them and appear for them as his children; and from all parts of the country they shall come up to the temple to worship. And we have reason to think, that tho' this promise has a further reference, yet it was graciously intended and piously used for the support and comfort of the captives in Babylon, as giving them a general assurance of mercy God had in store for them, and their land; their nation could not be destroyed so long as this blessing was in it, was in reserve for it.

2. Some think these promises will not have their accomplishment, at least not *in full*, till the general conversion of the Jews in the latter days, which is expected yet to come. When the vast incredible numbers of Jews, that are now dispersed as the sand of the sea, shall be brought to embrace the faith of Christ, and be incorporated in the gospel church. Then, and not till then, God will own them as his people, his children, even there where they had lain under the dismal tokens of their rejection. The Jewish doctors look upon this promise, as not having had its accomplishment yet. But,

3. It is certain this promise had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it, for to this these words are applied by St Paul, Rom. ix. 25, 26. and by St Peter when he writes to the Jews of the dispersion, 1 Pet. ii. 10. Israel here is the gospel church, the spiritual Israel, Gal. vi. 16. all believers, who follow the steps, and inherit the blessing of the faithful Abraham, who is the father of all that *believe*, whether Jews or Gentiles, Rom. iv. 11, 12. Now let us see what is promised concerning this Israel.

1. That it shall greatly multiply, and the numbers of it be increased; it shall be *as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured, nor numbred*. Tho' Israel, according to the flesh, be diminished, and made few, the spiritual Israel shall be numerous, shall be innumerable. In the vast multitudes that by the preaching of the gospel have been brought to Christ, both in the first ages of Christianity, and ever since, this promise is fulfilled. Thousands out of every tribe of Israel, and out of other nations, *a multitude which no man can number*, Rev. vii. 4, 9. Gal. iv. 27. in this, the promise made to Abram, when God called him Abraham, the *high father of a multitude* had its full accomplishment, Gen. xvii. 5.

and that *Gen. xxii. 17.* Some observe, that they are here compared to the *sand of the sea*, not only for their numbers, but as the *sand of the sea* serves for a boundary to the waters, that they shall not overflow the earth, so the Israelites indeed are a wall of defence to the places where they live, to keep off judgments; God can do nothing against Sodom while Lot is there.

2. That God will renew his covenant with the gospel Israel, and will incorporate it a church to himself, by as full and ample a charter as that whereby the Old Testament church was incorporated, nay, and its privileges shall be much greater. *In the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people*, there shall ye be again admitted into covenant, and owned as my people. The abandoned Gentiles in their respective places, and the rejected Jews in theirs, shall be favoured and blessed. There where the fathers were cast off for their unbelief, the children upon their believing shall be taken in. This is a blessed resurrection, the making of those the people of God that were *not a people*. Nay, but the privilege is enlarged, now it is not only *ye are my people*, as formerly, but *ye are the sons of the living God*, whether by birth ye were Jews or Gentiles. Israel under the law was *God's son, his first born*, but then they were as children under age, but now under the gospel they are grown up both to greater understanding, and greater liberty, *Gal. iv. 1, 2.* Note, 1. It is the unspeakable privilege of all believers, that they have the *living God* for their Father, the *ever-living God*, and may look upon themselves as *his children* by grace and adoption. 2. The sonship of believers shall be owned and acknowledged; it shall be *said to them* for their comfort and satisfaction, nay, and it shall be said for their honour, in the hearing of the world, *Ye are the sons of the living God*. Let not the saints disquiet themselves, let not others despise them, for sooner or later there shall be a manifestation of the children of God, and all the world shall be made to know their excellency, and the value God has for them.

3. It will add much to their comfort, very much to their honour, when they are dignified with the tokens of God's favour in that very place, where they had lain long under the tokens of his displeasure. This speaks comfort to the believing Gentiles, that they need not go up to Jerusalem to be received and owned as God's children, no, they may stay where they are, and *in that place*, tho' it be in the remotest corner of the earth, *in that place*, where they were at a distance, where it was said to them, *you are not God's people*, but are separated from them (*Isa. lvi. 3, 6.*) even there, without leaving your country and kindred, you may by faith receive the *Spirit of adoption*, witnessing with your spirits, that *you are the children of God*.

3. That those who had been at variance should be happily brought together, *ver. 11.* *Then shall the children of Judah, and the children of Israel be gathered together.* This uniting of Judah, and Israel, those two kingdoms that were now so much at variance, biting and devouring one another, is mentioned only as a specimen, or one instance, of the happy effect of the setting up of Christ's kingdom in the world, the bringing of those that had been at the greatest enmity one against another, to a good understanding one of another, and a good affection one to another. This was literally fulfilled, when the Galileans, who inhabited that part of the country which belonged to the ten tribes, and probably for the most part were descended from them, so heartily joined with those that were properly called Jews, (that were of Judea) in following Christ, and embracing his gospel; and his first disciples were partly Jews, and partly Galileans. The first that were blessed with the light of the gospel, were of the *land of Zebulun and Naphtali*, *Matt. iv. 15.* and tho' there was no good will at all between the Jews and the Galileans, yet upon their believing in Christ they were happily consolidated, and there were no remains of the former disaffection they had to one another; nay, when the Samaritans believed, tho' between them and the Jews there was a much greater enmity, yet in Christ there was a perfect unanimity, *Acts viii. 14.* Thus Judah and Israel were gathered together; yet this was but a type of the much more celebrated coalition between Jews and Gentiles, when by the death of Christ, the partition-wall of the ceremonial law was taken down. See *Eph. ii. 14, 15, 16.* Christ died to gather together in one all the children of God that were scattered abroad, *John xi. 52.* *Eph. i. 10.*

4. That Jesus Christ should be the centre of unity to all God's spiritual Israel. They shall all agree to appoint to themselves one head, which can be no other but he whom God hath appointed, even Christ. Note, Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the one only head of it; not only a head of government, as of the body politick, but a head of vital influence, as of the natural body. To believe in Christ is to appoint him to ourselves for our head, i. e. to consent to God's appointment, and willingly to commit ourselves to his guidance and government; and this in concurrence and communion with all good Christians, that make him their head; so that tho' they are many, yet in him they are one, and so become one with each other; *Qui conveniunt in aliquo tertio inter se conveniunt.*

5. That having appointed Christ for their head they shall come up out of the land, i. e. They shall come, some of all sorts, from all parts, to join themselves to the church, as under the Jewish economy they came up from all corners of the land of Israel,

to Jerusalem to worship, *Psal. cxxii. 4.* *Thither the tribes go up;* to which there is a plain allusion in that prophecy of the accession of the Gentiles to the church, *Isa. ii. 3.* *Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord.* It speaks not a local remove, for they are said to be in the same place, *ver. 10.* but a change of their minds, a spiritual ascent to Christ. They shall come up from the earth, so it may be read; for those that have given up themselves to Christ as their head, take their affections off from this earth, and the things of it, to set them upon things above, *Col. iii. 1, 2.* for they are not of the world, *John xv. 19.* but have their conversation in heaven. They shall come up out of the land, tho' it be the land of their nativity, they shall in affection come out from it, that they may follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes. Thus the learned Dr Pocock takes it.

6. That when all this comes to pass, Great shall be the day of Jezreel. Tho' great is the day of Jezreel's affliction, so some understand it, yet great shall be the day of Jezreel's glory. This shall be Israel's day; the day shall be their own, after their enemies have long had their day. Israel is here called Jezreel, the seed of God, the holy seed, *Isa. vi. 13.* the substance of the land; this seed is now sown in the earth, and buried under the clods; but great shall be its day when the harvest comes. Great was the church's day, when there were added to it daily such as should be saved; then did the Almighty do great things for it.

C H A P. II.

The scope of this chapter seems to be much the same with that of the foregoing chapter, and to point at the same events, and the causes of them. As there, so here, (1.) God by the prophet discovers sin to them, and chargeth it home upon them, the sin of their idolatry, their spiritual whoredom, their serving idols, and forgetting God, and their obligations to him, *ver. 1, 2, 5, 8.* (2.) He threatens to take away from them that plenty of all good things with which they had served their idols, and to abandon them to ruin without remedy, *ver. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9—13.* (3.) Yet he promiseth at last to return in ways of mercy to them, for his own sake, *ver. 14.* to restore them to their former plenty, *ver. 15.* to cure them of their inclination to idolatry, *ver. 16, 17.* to renew his covenant with them, *ver. 18—20.* and to bless them with all good things, *ver. 21—23.*

1. SAY ye unto your brethren, Ammi, and to your sisters, Ruhamah. 2. Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; 3. Lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. 4. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. 5. For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread, and my water, my wooll and my flax, mine oil and my drink.

The first words of this chapter some make the close of the foregoing chapter, and add it to the promises which we have here of the great things God would do for them; when they shall have appointed Christ their head, and centred in him, then let them say to one another with triumph and exaltation, *Let the prophets say it to them, so the Chaldee.* Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, is now their commission, say to them, Ammi, and Ruhamah, call them so again, for they shall no longer lie under the reproach and doom of Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah; they shall now be my people again, and obtain mercy. God's spiritual Israel, made up of Jews and Gentiles without distinction, shall call one another brethren and sisters, shall own one another for the people of God, and beloved of him, and for that reason shall embrace one another, and stir up one another both to give thanks for, and to walk worthy of, this common salvation which they partake of. Or rather, because the following words seem to have a coherence with these, these also are designed for conviction and humiliation. The mother, *ver. 2.* seems to be the same with the brethren and sisters, *ver. 1.* the church of the ten tribes, the body of the people, which were brethren, and in a special manner with the heads and leaders, which were as the mother by whom the rest were brought up and nursed. But who are the children that must plead with their mother thus? Either (1.) The godly that were among them, that witnessed against the iniquities

ties of the times, let them boldly go on to bear their testimony against the idolatries and gross corruptions that prevail among them. Let them that had not bowed the knee to Baal, reason the case with those that had, and endeavour to convince them with such arguments as are here put in their mouths. Note, Private persons may and ought, in their places, to appear and plead against the publick profanations of God's name and worship. Children may humbly and modestly argue with their parents, when they do amiss, *Plead with your mother, plead*, as Jonathan with Saul, concerning David. Or, (2.) The sufferers that were among them that *shared in the calamities* of the times, let them not complain of God, let them not quarrel with him, or lay the blame on him, as if he had dealt hardly with them, and not like a tender father, no let them *plead with their mother*, and lay the fault on her, where it ought to be laid; compare *Isa. l. 1. For her transgressions is your mother put away*, she may thank herself, and you may thank her for all your miseries. Let us see now how they must plead with her.

1. They must put her in mind of the relation wherein she had stood to God, the kindness he had had for her, the many favours he had bestowed upon her, and further favours he had designed her. Let them tell their *brethren and sisters* that they had been *Amni and Rubamah*, they had been God's people, and vessels of his mercy, and might have been so still, if it had not been their own fault, *ver. 1.* Note, Our relation to God, and dependence on him, is a great aggravation of our revolts from him, and rebellions against him.

2. They must in God's name charge her with the violation of the marriage-covenant between her and God: let them tell her that God doth not look upon her as his wife, nor upon himself as her husband any longer. Tell her, *ver. 2. that she is not my wife, neither am I her husband*; that by her spiritual whoredom, she has forfeited all the honour and comfort of her relation to God, and provoked him to give her a bill of divorce. Note, No consideration can be more powerful to awaken us to repentance, than the provocation we have by sin given to God to disown and cast us off. It is time to look about us, and to think what course we must take, when God threatens to reject us; for wo unto us if he be not *our husband*. They must charge this home upon her, *ver. 5. Their mother has played the harlot; their congregation hath run a whoring after false prophets*, so the Chaldees, or rather *after idols*, wherein they were encouraged by their false prophets; *she that conceived them hath done shamefully*, in making and worshipping idols. An idol is called a *shame*, chap. ix. 10. and idolatry is a *shameful thing*. It is not only an affront to God, but a reproach to men, to *fall down to the stock of a tree*, as the prophet speaks, or it notes not only that the sinner was shameless, impudent in sin, and could not blush; *Jer. vi. 15. Or, she has made ashamed*, has made all that see her ashamed of her; her own children are ashamed of their relation to her.

3. They must upbraid her with her horrid ingratitude to God, her benefactor, in ascribing to her idols the glory of the gifts he had given her, and then giving that for a reason why she paid them the homage due to him only, *ver. 5.* In this she *did shamefully* indeed that *she said, I will go after my lovers that give me my bread and my water*. Observe here, (1.) Her wicked resolution to persist in idolatry, notwithstanding all that God said both by his prophets and by his providences to draw her from it; *she said, Whatever is offered to the contrary, I will go after my lovers*: or, *Those that cause me to love them*, whom I cannot but be in love with. The Chaldees understand it of the nations whose alliance Israel courted and depended upon: who supplied them with what they needed. But it is rather to be understood of the idols they worshipped; to justify their love of which, they called them *their lovers*. See who *do shamefully*, those that are wilful and resolute in sin; and those that openly profess and own their resolution to go on in it. See the folly of idolaters to call those their *lovers* that had not so much as life; yet let us learn to call *our God, our lover*; let us keep up good thoughts of him, and put a high value upon our interest in him, and in his love. (2.) The gross mistake upon which this resolution was grounded; I will go after my lovers, because they give me *my bread and my water*, which are necessary to sustain the body, *my wooll and my flax*, which are necessary to clothe the body, and pleasant things, *my oil, and my drink*, my liquors, so the word is, wine and strong drink. Note, 1. The things of sense are the best things with carnal hearts, and the most powerful attractives, and in pursuit of which, they care not what they follow after. The God of Israel set before them his *sentences and judgments*, Deut. iv. 6. *more to be desired than gold, and sweeter than honey*, Psal. xix. 10. promised them his favour, which would put gladness into their hearts *more than corn, wine and oil*, Psal. iv. 7. But they had no relish at all of these things; whence they thought their *oil and their drink* came, thither they would return their best affections. *O curvæ in terram animæ & celestium inanes!*

2. It is a great abuse and injury to God, in pursuance of the pleasures and delights of sense to forsake him, who not only gives us *better things*, but gives us even *those things* too. The idolaters made Ceres the goddess of their corn, Bacchus the god of their wine, &c. and then foolishly fancied they had their corn and wine from these, forgetting the Lord their God, who both gave

them that good land, and gave them power to get wealth out of it. 3. Many are hardened in sin by their worldly prosperity; they had an abundance of those things when they served their idols, and then imagined them to be given them by their idols, which kept them to their service; thus they argued, *Jer. xlv. 17, 18. while we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, we had plenty of victuals.*

4. They must persuade her to repent and reform; God will disown her if she persist in her whoredoms, *let her therefore put away her whoredoms*, *ver. 2.* Let her be convinced that it is possible she may reform; the idols as dear as they are, may yet be parted with, and it will certainly be well with her if she do reform. Note, Our pleading with sinners must be to drive them to repentance, not to drive them to despair. Let her *put away her whoredoms, and her adulteries*, the doubling of the words to the same purpose, and both plural, notes the abundance of idolatries they were guilty of, all which must be *abandoned*, e'er God would be *reconciled* to them. Let her put them out of her sight, as detestable things which she cannot endure to look upon, let her say unto them, *Get ye hence*, *Isa. xxx. 22.* Let her put them from her face, and from *between her breasts*, i. e. Let her not do as harlots use to do, that both discover their own wicked disposition, and allure others to wickedness by painting their faces, and exposing their naked breasts, and adorning them; let her not thus by annexing all possible gaieties and pleasures to the worship of idols, engage herself, and allure others to it. Let her *put away* all these. Every sinful course persisted in, is an adulterous departure from God; and here we may see what it is truly to repent of it, and turn from it. (1.) True penitents will forsake both open sins, and secret sins; will *put away* not only the whoredoms that lie in sight, but those that lie in secret, *between their breasts*; the sin that is *rolled under the tongue as a sweet morsel*. (2.) They will both avoid the outward occasions of sin, and mortify the inward disposition to it. Idolaters walked after their own eyes, which *went a whoring* after their idols, *Ezek. vi. 9. Deut. iv. 19.* and therefore they must put them away out of their sight, lest they should be tempted to worship them, *Look not upon the wine when it is red*. But that is not enough, the ax must be laid to the root, the corrupt bent, and inclination of the heart must be changed, and it must be put away from *between the breasts*, that Christ alone may have the innermost and uppermost place there. *Cant. i. 13.*

5. They must shew her the utter ruin that will certainly be the fatal consequence of her sin, if she do not repent and reform, *ver. 3. Left I strip her naked*. This comes in here not by way of sentence passed upon her, but by way of warning given to her, that she may prevent it. *Let her put away her whoredoms, that I may not strip her naked*, so it may be read; intimating, that God waits to shew mercy to sinners, if they would but qualify themselves for that mercy. It is here threatened, that God will deal with her, as the just and jealous husband at length doth with an adulterous wife, that hath filled his house with a *spurious* brood, and will not be reclaimed, he turns her and her children out of doors, and sends them a begging. *I will not have mercy upon her children*, *ver. 4.* the particular persons that share in the calamity of the nation, and the rising generation shall be ruined by it, for they are *children of whoredoms*, and keep up the vain conversation received by tradition from their fathers. Now it is here threatened, that they shall be both *stript and starved*; they thought their idols gave them *their bread and their water, their wooll and their flax*, but God by taking them away, will let them know it was he that gave them.

1. She shall be *stript*. *Left I strip her* of all her ornaments which she is proud of, and with which she courts her lovers; *strip her* and set her *as in the day that she was born*, i. e. send her as naked out of the world as she came into it; this death doth, *Job i. 21. I will strip her*, and so expose her to cold, and expose her to shame, and justly is she exposed to shame that *did shamefully*, *ver. 5.* The day when God brought them out of Egypt, where they were no better than slaves and beggars, was *the day in which they were born*; and God threatens to bring them back to as low and miserable a condition as he then found them in. Whatever they had that either gained them respect, or screened them from contempt among their neighbours, should be taken from them. See *Ezek. xvi. 4, 39.*

2. She shall be *starved*; shall be deprived not only of her honours, but of her comforts, and necessary supports. She shall be famished, shall be made *as a wilderness, and a dry land, and slain with thirst*. She that boasted so much of her bread and water, her oil, and her drinks which her lovers had given her, shall not have so much as *necessary food*. The land shall not afford subsistence for the inhabitants, for want of the rain of heaven; or if it do, it shall be taken from them by the enemy, so that the rightful owners shall perish for want of it. Some understand it thus; *I will make her as she was in the wilderness*, and set her as she was in the desert land, where she was sometimes ready to perish for thirst. So it explains the former part of the verse, *I will set her as in the day that she was born*, for it was in the vast howling wilderness that Israel was first formed into a people. They shall be in as deplorable a condition as their fathers were in, whose carcases fell in the wilderness, and in this respect worse,

worse, that then the children were reserved to be heirs of the and of promise, but now, *I will not have mercy upon her children, for their mother hath played the harlot.*

6. ¶ Therefore behold, I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and make a wall; that she shall not find her paths. 7. And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband, for then was it better with me than now. 8. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oyl, and multiplied her silver, and gold, *which* they prepared for Baal. 9. Therefore will I return, and take away my corn in the time thereof, and my wine in the season thereof, and will recover my wooll and my flax given to cover her nakedness. 10. And now will I discover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and none shall deliver her out of mine hand. 11. I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new-moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts. 12. And I will destroy her vines, and her fig-trees, whereof she hath said, These are my rewards that my lovers have given me: and I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field shall eat them. 13. And I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, wherein she burnt incense to them, and she decked her self with her ear-rings and her jewels; and she went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the LORD.

God here goes on to threaten what he would do with this treacherous idolatrous people; and therefore he *warns* that he may not wound, therefore he *threatens* that he may not strike. If he turn not, he will wet his sword, Psal. vii. 12. but if he turn he will sheathe it. They did not turn, and therefore all this came upon them; and its being threatned before, shews that it was the execution of a divine sentence upon them for their wickedness; and it is written for admonition to us.

1. They shall be perplexed and embarrassed in all their counsels, and disappointed in all their expectations. This is threatned, ver. 6, 7. But to the threatning is annexed a promise, that this shall be a means to convince them of their folly, and bring them home to their duty; and so good shall be brought out of evil, in token of the mercy God has yet in reserve for them. And this being the happy fruit and effect of the distress, it is hard to say whether the prediction or the distress itself should be called a threatning or a promise.

1. God will raise up difficulties and troubles in their way; so that their publick counsels and affairs shall have no success, nor shall they be able to get forward in them. *I will hedge up thy way with thorns*, i. e. with such crosses as like thorns and briars are the product of sin and the curse, and are scratching, and tearing, and vexing; and when the way we are in is hedged up with them, stop our progress, and force us to turn back. She said, *I will go after my lovers*, I will pursue my leagues and alliances with foreign powers, and depend upon them; but God saith, she shall be frustrated in these projects, and not be able to proceed in them. *I will hedge up thy way with thorns*, and if that do not serve, *I will make a wall*. If some lesser difficulties be got over, and prevail not to break thy measures, God will raise greater, for he will overcome when he judgeth. It shall be such a hedge and such a wall, as that she shall not find her paths. The change of the person here, I will hedge up thy way, and then she shall not find it, is usual in scripture, especially in an earnest way of speaking: Sinner, do thou take notice, *I will hedge up thy way*, and all you that are bystanders take notice what will be the effect of this, you may observe that she cannot find her paths; she shall be as a traveller that not only knows not which way to go of many that are before him, but that finds no way at all to go forward. And then she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them, shall endeavour to make an interest in the Assyrians and Egyptians, and to have them for her protectors: But she shall not gain her point; they shall either not come into confederacy with her, or do her no service, shall help in vain, and be as the staff of a broken reed. She shall seek them but shall not find them, shall seek to her idols, but shall not find that satisfaction in them that she promised herself; the gods whom she trusted and courted not only can do nothing for her, but have nothing to say to her to encourage her. Now, (1.) This is such a just judgment as the Sodomites met with that were struck with blindness, and wearied themselves to find the door, Gen. xix. 11. and the Syrians, 2 Kings vi. 18. Note, Those that are most resolute in their sinful pursuits, are commonly most crossed in them. Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward, Prov. xxii. 5. and thus with them God shews himself froward, Psal. xviii. 26. and walks contrary to those that walk contrary to him, Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. The lamenting prophet complains, he hath enclosed my

ways, Lam. iii. 7, 9. The way of God and duty is often hedged about with thorns, but we have reason to think it is a sinful way that is hedged up with thorns. (2.) This is such a kind rebuke, and indeed such a mercy as Baalam met with, when the angel stood in his way to hinder his going forward to curse Israel, Numb. xxii. 22. Note, Crosses and obstacles in an evil course are great blessings, and are so to be accounted; they are God's hedges to keep us from transgressing; to restrain us from wandering out of the green pastures, to withdraw man from his purpose, Job xxxiii. 17. to make the way of sin difficult that we may not go on in it, and to keep us from it whether we will or not. We have reason to bless God both for restraining grace, and for restraining providences.

2. These difficulties that God raiseth up in their way shall raise up in their minds thoughts of turning back. Then shall she say, since I cannot overtake my lovers, I will even go and return to my first husband, i. e. will return to God, and humble myself to him, and desire him to take me in again, for when I kept close to him it was every way better with me than now. Two things are here extorted from this degenerate, apostate people. (1.) A just acknowledgment of the folly of their apostasy: They are now brought to own, that it was better with them while they kept close to their God, than ever it was since they forsook him. Note, Whoever have exchanged the service of God for the service of the world and the flesh, have sooner or later been made to own, that they changed for the worse; and that while they continued in good company, and went on in the way of good duties, and made conscience how they spent their time, and what they said or did, it was better with them, they had more true comfort and enjoyment of themselves than ever they had since they went astray. (2.) A good purpose to come back again to their duty; *I will go and return to my first husband*, and she knows so much of his goodness and readiness to forgive, that she speaks without any doubt of his receiving her again into favour, and making her condition as good as ever. Note, The disappointments we meet with in our pursuits of satisfaction in the creature, should, if nothing else will do it, drive us at length to the Creator, in whom alone it is to be had. When Moab is weary of the high place, he shall go to the sanctuary, Isa. xvi. 12. And when the prodigal son is reduced to husks, short allowance indeed, and remembers that in his father's house there is bread enough, then he saith, *I will arise, and go to my father's house*, Luke xv. 17, 18.

2. The necessary supports and comforts of life shall be taken from them, because they had dishonoured God with them, ver. 8, 9. Their land was plenteous. Now see here,

1. How graciously their plenty was given to them. God gave them not only corn for necessity, but wine for delight, and oil for ornament. Nay, He multiplied their silver and gold, wherewith to traffick with other nations, and bring home their products; and which they might hoard up for posterity; silver and gold will keep longer than corn, and wine, and oil. He gave them wooll and flax too, to cover their nakedness, and to serve for ornament enough to them, Ezek. xvi. 10. Note, God is a bountiful benefactor even to those who he foresees will be ungrateful, and unthankful to him.

2. How basely their plenty was abused by them. (1.) They robbed God of the honour of his gifts. She did not know that I gave her corn and wine, i. e. she did not remember it. The law and the prophets had told them again and again, that all their comforts they received from God's bountiful providence: But they were so often told by their false prophets and idolatrous priests, that they had their corn from such an idol, and their wine from such an idol, &c. that they had quite forgot their relation to their great benefactor, and their obligations to him. She did not consider it, she would not acknowledge it; this they were willingly ignorant of, and more brutish than the ox that knows his owner, and the ass that knows his master's crib. She did not know it, for she did not return thanks to him for his gifts, nor study what she should render; nor did she give him his dues out of them, and so carried it as if she were ignorant who was the donor. (2.) They served and honoured his enemies with them. They prepared them for Baal, they adorned their images with gold and silver, Jer. x. 4. and adorned themselves for the worship of their images, ver. 13. See Ezek. xvi. 17, 18, 19. Wherewith they made Baal, so the margin reads it, i. e. the image of Baal. Note, It is a very great dishonour to the God of heaven to make those gifts of his providence the food and fuel of our lusts, which he gave us for our support in his service, and to be oil to the wheels of our obedience.

3. How justly their plenty should be taken from them. Therefore will I return, I will alter my dealings with them, will take another course, and will take away my corn, and other good things that I gave her. I will recover it; a law-term; as a man by due course of law recovers what is unjustly detained from him; or, as when the tenant has committed waste, the landlord recovers locum vastatum. Observe, God calls it my corn and my wine, my wooll and my flax; they called it theirs, my bread and my water, ver. 5. But God lets them know they were not theirs, he only allowed them the use of them as tenants, intrusted them with the management of them as stewards, but still reserved the property in himself; it is my corn, and my wine. Note, God will have us to know, not only that we have all our creature-comforts and enjoyments

ments from him, but that he has still an incontestable right and title to them, that they are more *his* than *ours*, and therefore are to be used for him, and accounted for to him. He will therefore take it away from them, because they have forfeited it by disowning his right; as a tenant by copy of court-roll, who holds at the will of his lord forfeits his estate, if he makes a feoffment of it as if he were a freeholder. He will recover it, will free or deliver it, that it may be no longer abused; as the creature is said to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, under which it groans, Rom. viii. 21. He will take it away in the time thereof and in the season thereof, then when they expected it, and thought they were free of it: It shall suffer shipwreck in the harbour; and the harbour shall be a heap. He will take it away by unseasonable weather, or by unreasonable men. Note, Those that abuse the mercies God gives them to his dishonour, cannot expect to enjoy them long.

3. They shall lose all their honour, and be exposed to contempt. Ver. 10. I will discover her lewdness, i. e. will bring to light all her secret wickedness, and make it publick to her shame; I will shew by the punishment of it how heinous, how odious, how offensive it is. The fact has been denied, but now it shall appear; the fault has been diminished; but now it shall appear exceeding sinful. And this in the sight of her lovers, i. e. in the sight of the neighbour nations with whom she courted an alliance, and on whom she had a dependence, they shall despise her, and be ashamed of her, because of her weakness, and poverty, and ill conduct; they shall not think her any longer worthy of their friendship. See this fulfilled, Lam. i. 8. All that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness. Or in the sight of the sun and moon, which she worshipped as her lovers, before them shall her lewdness be discovered. Compare this with Jer. viii. 1, 2. They shall bring out the bones of their kings and princes, and spread them before the sun and moon, whom they have loved and served. Note, Sin will have shame, let those expect it that have done shamefully. What other lot can this impudent adulterers expect but that of a common whore, to be carted through the town. And when God comes to deal thus with her, none shall deliver her out of his hands; neither the gods nor the men they confide in. Note, Those who will not deliver themselves into the hand of God's mercy, cannot be delivered out of the hand of his justice.

4. They shall lose all their pleasure, and shall be left melancholy. Ver. 11. I will cause her mirth to cease. It seems then, tho' they had gone a whoring from their God, yet they could find in their hearts to rejoice as other people, which is forbidden, chap. ix. 1. Note, Many who lie under guilt and wrath, are yet very jocund and merry, and live jovially; but whether in their laughter their hearts be sad or no, it is certain the end of their mirth will be heaviness. For God will cause all their mirth to cease. It is as Mr Burroughs observes here, sin and mirth can never hold long together; but if men will not take away sin from their mirth, God will take away mirth from their sin.

(1.) God will take away the occasions of their sacred mirth; their feast-days, their new moons, their sabbaths, and all their solemn feasts. These God instituted to be observed in a religious manner, and they were to be observed with rejoicing; and it seems tho' they had departed from the pure worship of God, yet they kept up the observation of these; not at God's temple at Jerusalem, for they had long since forsaken that, but probably at Dan and Bethel where the calves were, or in some other places of meeting that they had. They observed them not for the honour of God, or with any true devotion towards him, but only because they were times of mirth and feasting, musick and dancing, and meeting of friends, received by tradition from their fathers. Thus, when they had lost the power of godliness, and denied that, yet for the pleasing of a vain and carnal mind, they kept up the form of it; and by this means their new moons and their sabbaths became an iniquity, which God could not away with, Isa. i. 13. Now observe, (1.) God calls them their new moons, and their sabbaths, not *his*, he disowns them, but *theirs*. (2.) He will cause them to cease. Note, When men by their sins have caused the life and substance of ordinances to cease, it is just with God by his judgments to cause the remaining shew and shadow of them to cease.

(2.) He will take away the supports of their carnal mirth. They loved the new moons and the sabbaths, only for the sake of good cheer that was stirring then, not for the sake of any religious exercises then performed, these they had dropped long ago; and now God will take away their provisions for these solemnities: ver. 12. I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees. Note, If men destroy God's word and ordinances by which he should be honoured on their feast-days, it is just with him to destroy their vines and fig-trees with which they use to regale themselves. While they took the pleasure of these, they gave their lovers the praise of them. These are my rewards which my lovers have given me, I may thank my stars for these, and my worship of them; I may thank my neighbours for these, and my alliance with them. And therefore God will destroy them, will wither them with a blast, or bring in a foreign enemy that shall lay the country waste, so that their vineyards shall become a forest; the enclosures shall be thrown down, as usual in war, all shall be laid in common, so that the beasts of the field shall eat their grapes; and their figs. Or, they shall be so No. lxxii.

blasted with the east-wind, that fruit-trees shall be of no more use than forest trees; but being withered and good for nothing, what fruit there is shall be left to the beasts of the field. Or, it shall be devoured by their enemies, by men as barbarous as wild beasts.

Now, (1.) This shall be the ruin of their mirth. God will cause all her mirth to cease; How will he do it? Taking away the new moons and the sabbaths will not do it, they can very easily part with them, and find no loss; but I will destroy her vines and her fig-trees, will take away her sensual pleasures, and then she will think herself undone indeed. Note, The destruction of the vines and the fig-trees causeth all the mirth of a carnal heart to cease; it will say as Micah, you have taken away my gods, and what have I more?

(2.) This shall be the punishment of her idolatry. Ver. 13. I will visit upon her the days of Baalim, i. e. I will reckon with her for all the worship of all the Baals they have made gods of, from the days of their fathers unto this day. We read of their worshipping Baal as long ago as the time of the Judges, and for ought I know this may look as far back as those times, those days of Baalim; for it is in the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, that God threatens to visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the children; and justly is that sin so visited more than any other, because it commonly supports itself by prescription, and long usage. Now the measure of the iniquity of Israel was full, all their former sins came into the account, and shall be required of this generation. Or, the days of Baalim are the solemn festival days which they kept in honour of their idols. Days of sinful mirth must be visited in days of mourning. These were the days wherein she burnt incense to idols; and, to grace the solemnity, decked herself with her ear-rings and her jewels, that appearing honourable, the honour she did to Baal might be thought the greater. Or, she was as a wife that decks herself with the ear-rings and jewels that her husband gave her to make herself amiable to her lovers, whom she follows after, and is ever mindful of: But she forgot me, saith the Lord. Note, Our treacherous departures from God are owing to our forgetfulness of him, of his nature and attributes, his relation to us, and our obligations to him. Many that plead they have weak memories, and forget the things of God, yet can remember other things well enough; nay, it is because they are so mindful of lying vanities, that they are so forgetful of their own mercies.

14. ¶ Therefore behold, I will allure her and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. 15. And I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt. 16. And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali. 17. For I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name. 18. And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow, and the sword, and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely. 19. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies. 20. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the LORD. 21. And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the LORD, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth, 22. And the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oyl, and they shall hear Jezreel. 23. And I will sow her unto me in the earth, and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy, and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my GOD.

The state of Israel ruined by their own sin did not look so black and dismal in the former part of the chapter, but that the state of Israel restrained by the divine grace, looks as bright and pleasant here in the latter part of the chapter; and the more surprizingly so, as the promises follow thus close upon the threatenings; nay, which is very strange, they are by a note of connexion joined to and inferred from that declaration of their sinfulness upon which the threatenings of their ruin are grounded; She went after her lovers, and forgot me, saith the Lord, therefore I will allure her. Fitly therefore is that therefore, which is the note of connexion, immediately followed with a note of admiration, Behold, I will allure her! When it was said, She forgot me, one would think it should have followed, therefore I will abandon her, I will forget her, I will never look after her more; no, there-

fore I will allure her. Note, God's thoughts and ways of mercy are infinitely above ours; his reasons are all fetched from within himself, and not from any thing in us; nay, his goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious, *Isa. lvi. 17, 18.* Therefore because she will not be restrained by the denunciations of wrath, God will try whether she will be wrought upon by the offers of mercy. Some think it may be translated *afterwards*, or *nevertheless*, I will allure her. It comes all to one; the design is plainly to magnify free-grace to those on whom God will have mercy, purely for mercy's sake.

Now that which is here promised to Israel, is,

1. That tho' now they were disconsolate and ready to despair, they should again be revived with comforts and hopes, *ver. 14, 15.* This is expressed here with an allusion to God's dealings with that people, when he brought them out of Egypt, through the wilderness to Canaan; as their forlorn and deplorable condition in their captivity was compared to their state in *Egypt in the day that they were born*, *ver. 3.* They shall be *new formed* by such miracles of love and mercy as they were *first formed*; and such a transport of joy shall they be in as they were in then. It is hard to say when this had its accomplishment in the kingdom of the ten tribes; but it principally aims, no doubt, at the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles into the church by the gospel of Christ; and it is applicable, nay we have reason to think it was designed that it should be applied to the conversion of particular souls to God. Now observe,

1. The gracious methods God will take with them. (1.) He will *bring them into the wilderness*, as he did at first when he brought them out of Egypt, where he instructed them, and took them into covenant with himself. The land of their captivity shall be to them now as that wilderness was then, the *furnace of affliction*, in which God will *chuse them*. See *Ezek. xx. 35, 36.* *I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you.* God had said he would *make them as a wilderness*, *ver. 3.* which was a threatening, now when it is here made part of a promise that he would *bring them into the wilderness*, the meaning may be, that he would by his grace bring their minds to their condition, they shall have humble hearts under humbling providences; being poor, shall be poor in spirit, shall *accept of the punishment of their iniquity*, and then they are prepared to have comfort spoken to them. When God delivered Israel out of Egypt he led them into the wilderness, to *humble them and prove them, that he might do them good*, *Deut. viii. 2, 3, 15, 16.* and so he will do again. Note, Those whom God has mercy in store for he first *brings into a wilderness*; into *solitude and retirement*, that they may the more freely converse with him out of the noise of this world; into *distress of mind* through sense of guilt and dread of wrath, which brings a soul to be quite at a loss in itself, and bewildered, and by those convictions he prepares for consolations; and sometimes into *outward distress* and trouble, by that to open the ear to discipline. (2.) He will then *allure them, and speak comfortably to them*; will *persuade them, and speak to their hearts*; i. e. he will by his word and Spirit incline their hearts to return to him; and encourage them to do so. He will allure them with the promises of his favour, as before he had terrified them with the threatnings of his wrath; will *speak friendly* to them, both by his prophets and by his providences, as before he had *spoken roughly*. *Isa. xl. 1, 2.* *By the hand of my servants the prophets I will speak comfort to her heart*; so the Chaldee. This refers to the gospel of Christ, and the offers of divine grace in the gospel, by which we are *allured* to forsake our sins, and to turn to God, and which *speaks to the heart* of a convinced sinner, that which is every way suited to his case, speaks abundant consolation to those that sorrow for sin, and lament after the Lord. And when by the Spirit it is indeed *spoken to the heart*, effectually, and so as to reach the conscience, (which it is God's prerogative to do) O what a blessed change is wrought by it! Note, The best way of reducing wandering souls to God, is *by fair means*. By the promise of rest in Christ we are invited to take his yoke upon us; and the work of conversion may be forwarded by comforts as well as by convictions. (3.) He will *give her her vineyards from thence*; from that time, and from that place, where he hath afflicted her, and brought her to see her folly and to humble herself, from thenceforward he will *do her good*; not only *speak comfortably* to her, but do well for her, and undo what he had done against her. He had *destroyed her vines*, *ver. 12.* but now he will give her whole *vineyards*, as if for every vine destroyed she should have a vineyard restored, and so be repaid with interest; she shall not only have *corn* for necessity, but *vineyards* for delight. These note the privileges and comforts of the gospel, which are prepared for those that *come up out of the wilderness leaning upon Christ as their beloved*, *Cant. viii. 5.* Note, God has vineyards of consolation ready to bestow on those who repent and return to him; and he can give vineyards *out of a wilderness*, which are of all other the most welcome, as rest to the weary. (4.) He will give her *the valley of Achor for a door of hope*. The valley of Achor was that in which Achan was stoned, it signifies *the valley of trouble*, because he troubled Israel, and there God troubled him. This was in the beginning of the wars of Canaan, and their putting away the accursed thing in that place, gave them ground to

hope, that God would continue his presence with them, and complete their victories. So when God returns to his people in mercy, and they to him in duty, it will be to them as happy an *omen* as any other, if they put away the *accursed thing* from among them, if by mortifying sin they stone the Achan that has troubled their camp; their subduing that enemy within themselves, is an earnest to them of victory over all the kings of Canaan. Or, if the allusion be to the name, it intimates, that *trouble* for sin, if it be sincere, opens a *door of hope*; for that sin that truly troubles us, shall not ruin us. The valley of Achor was a very fruitful pleasant valley, some think, the same with the valley of Engedi, famous for vineyards, *Cant. i. 14.* This God gave to Israel as a pattern and pledge of the whole land of Canaan, so "God will by his gospel give to all believers such gifts, graces, and comforts, in this life, as shall be a taste of those more perfect good things of the kingdom of heaven, and shall give them an assured hope of a full possession of them in due time." So the learned Dr Pocock expounds it; and to the same purpose this whole context.

2. The great rejoicing with which they shall receive God's gracious returns towards them. *She shall sing there, as in the days of her youth.* This plainly refers to that triumphant and prophetick song which Moses and the children of Israel sung at the *Red-sea*, *Exod. xv. 1.* When they are delivered out of captivity, they shall repeat that song, and to them it shall be a *new song*, because sung upon a new occasion, not inferior to the former. God had said, *ver. 11.* he would *cause all her mirth to cease*, but now he would cause it to revive; she shall sing *as in the day that she came out of Egypt*. Note, When God repeats former mercies, we must repeat former praises; we find the song of Moses sung in the New Testament, *Rev. xv. 3.* This promise of Israel's singing has its accomplishment in the gospel of Christ, which furnisheth us with abundant matter for joy and praise; and wherever it is received in its power, enlargeth their heart in joy and praise; and is that land flowing with milk and honey, which the valley of Achor opens a *door of hope* to. *We rejoice in tribulation.*

2. That tho' they had been much addicted to the worship of Baal, they should now be perfectly weaned from it, shall relinquish and abandon all appearances of idolatry, and approaches towards it, and cleave to God only, and worship him as he appoints, *ver. 16, 17.* Note, The surest pledge and token of God's favour to any people, is his effectual parting between them and their beloved sins. The worship of Baal was the sin that did most easily beset the people of Israel, it was their own iniquity, the sin that had dominion over them; but now that idolatry shall be quite abolished, and there shall not be the least remains of it among them.

1. The idols of Baal shall not be mentioned, not any of the Baals that *in the days of Baalim* had made so great a noise with *O Baal, hear us; O Baal, hear us.* The very names of Baalim shall be *taken out of their mouths*; they shall be so *disused*, that they shall be quite forgotten, as if their names had never been known in Israel; they shall be so detested, that people will not bear to mention them themselves, or to hear others mention them; so that posterity shall scarce know that ever there were such things. They shall be so ashamed of their former love to Baal, that they shall do all they can to blot out the remembrance of it. They shall tie themselves up to the strictest literal meaning of that law against idolatry, *Exod. xxiii. 13.* *Make no mention of the names of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth*, as David, *Psal. xvi. 4.* Thus the apostle expresseth the abhorrence we ought to have of all fleshly lusts, *Let them not be once named among you*, *Eph. v. 3.* But how can such a change of the Ethiopian's skin be wrought? It is answered, the power of God can do it, and will. *I will take away the names of Baalim*, as *Zech. xiii. 2.* *I will cut off the names of the idols.* Note, God's grace in the heart will change the language by making that iniquity to be *loathed* which was *beloved*. *Zeph. iii. 9.* *I will turn to the people a pure language.* One of the rabbins saith, This promise relates to the Gentiles as well as Israel; and we know it had its accomplishment in the turning of the Gentiles, by the gospel of Christ, from the idolatries which they had been wedded to, *1 Thes. i. 9.*

2. The very word Baal shall be laid aside, even in its innocent signification, God saith, *Thou shalt call me Ishi, and call me no more Baali*; both signify *my husband*, and both had been made use of concerning God. *Isa. liv. 5.* *Thy maker is thy husband*, thy Baal, so the word is, thy owner, patron, and protector. It is probable, many good people had accordingly made use of the word Baali in worshipping the God of Israel; when their wicked neighbours bowed the knee to Baal, they gloried in this, that God was their Baal. But, saith God, you shall call me so no more, because I will have the very names of Baalim taken away. Note, That which is very innocent in itself, yet when it has been abused to idolatry, should be abolished, and the very use of it taken away, that nothing may be done to keep idols in remembrance, much less to keep them in reputation. When calling God Ishi will do as well, and signify as much as Baali; let that word be chosen rather, lest by calling him Baali, others should be put in mind of their *quondam* Baals. Some think there

here is another reason intimated why God would be called *Ishi*, and not *Baali*, they both signify my husband, but *Ishi* is a commendation of love, and sweetness, and familiarity, *Baali* of reverence and subjection. *Ishi* is *vir meus*, *Baali* is *dominus meus*. In gospel-times God hath so revealed himself to us, as to encourage us to come boldly to the throne of his grace, and to use a holy humble freedom there; we ought to call God our master, for so he is, but we are more taught to call him our Father. *Ishi* is a man the Lord, (Gen. iv. 1.) and intimates, that in gospel-times the church's husband shall be the man Christ Jesus; made like unto his brethren, and therefore they shall call him *Ishi*, not *Baali*.

3. That tho' they had been in continual troubles, as if the whole creation had been at war with them, now they shall enjoy perfect peace and tranquillity, as if they were in a league of friendship with the whole creation. Ver. 18. In that day, when they have forsaken their idols, and put themselves under the divine protection, I will make a covenant for them. (1.) They shall be protected from evil, nothing shall hurt them, or do them any mischief. *Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia*. The inferior creatures shall do them no harm, as they had done, when the beasts of the field eat up their vineyards, ver. 12. and when noisome beasts were one of God's sore judgments, Ezek. xiv. 15. The fowl, and the creeping things are taken into this covenant, for they also, when God makes use of them as the instruments of his justice, may become very hurtful. But they shall be no more so; nay, by virtue of this covenant they shall be made serviceable to them, and brought into their interests. Note, God has the command of the inferior creatures, and brings them into what covenant he pleaseth; he can make the beasts of the field to honour him, so he has promised, Isa. xliii. 20. and to contribute to his peoples comfort. And if the inferior creatures are thus laid under an engagement to serve us, it is our part of the covenant not to abuse them, but to serve God with them. Some think this had its accomplishment in the miraculous power Christ gave his disciples to take up serpents, Mark xvi. 17, 18. It agrees with the promises made particularly to Israel in their return out of captivity, Ezek. xxxiv. 25. I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land, and the more general ones to all the saints, Job v. 22, 23. The beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee; and Psal. xci. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder. But this is not all; men are more in danger from one another than from the brute beast, and therefore it is further promised, that God will make wars to cease, will disarm the enemy. I will break the bow, and sword, and battle. He can do it when he pleaseth, Psal. xlv. 9. and will do it for those whose ways please him, for he maketh even their enemies to be at peace with them, Prov. xvi. 7. This agrees with the promise, that in gospel-times, swords shall be beaten into plow-shares, Isa. ii. 4. (2.) They shall be quiet from the fear of evil. God will not only keep them safe, but make them to lie down safely, as those that know themselves to be under the protection of heaven, and therefore are not afraid of the power of hell.

4. That tho' God had given them a bill of divorce for their whoredoms, yet upon their repentance he would again take them into covenant with himself, into a marriage-covenant. Ver. 19, 20. God's making a covenant for them with the inferior creatures was a great favour, but it was nothing to this, that he took them into covenant with himself, and engaged himself to do them good. Observe, (1.) The nature of this covenant; it is a marriage-covenant, founded in choice and love, and founding the nearest relation. I will betroth thee unto me, and again, a third time I will betroth thee. Note, All that are sincerely devoted to God, are betrothed to him; i. e. God gives them the most sacred and inviolable security imaginable, that he will love them, protect them, and provide for them; and that he will do the part of a husband to them; and that he will incline their hearts to join themselves to him, and will graciously accept of them in so doing. Believing souls are espoused to Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2. The gospel-church is the bride the Lamb's wife; and they would never come into that relation to him, if he did not by the power of his grace betroth them to himself. The separation begins on our side, we alienate ourselves from God; the coalition begins on his side, he betroths us to himself. (2.) The duration of this covenant; I will betroth thee for ever. The covenant itself shall be inviolable; God will not break it on his part, and you shall not on yours; and the blessings of it shall be everlasting. One of the Jewish rabbins saith, This is a promise, that she shall attain to the life of the world to come, which is absolute eternity or perpetuity. (3.) The manner how this covenant shall be made; (1.) In righteousness and judgment; i. e. God will deal sincerely and uprightly in covenanting with them: they have broken covenant, and God is righteous; but, saith God, I will renew the covenant in righteousness; the matter shall be so ordered as that God may receive even these backsliding children into his family again, without any reflection upon his justice, nay, that being satisfied by the mediator of this covenant, very much to the honour of it. But what reason can there be why God should take a people into covenant with him, that had so often dealt treacherously? Will it not reflect upon his wisdom? No, saith God, I will do it in judgment; not rashly, but upon due con-

sideration: let me alone to give a reason for it, and to justify my own conduct. (2.) In loving-kindness and in mercies. God will deal tenderly and graciously in covenanting with them; and will be not only as good as his word, but better; and as he will be just in keeping covenant with them, so he will be merciful in keeping them in the covenant. They are subject to many infirmities, and if he be extreme to mark what they do amiss, they will soon lose the benefit of the covenant. He therefore promiseth, that it shall be a covenant of grace, made in a compassionate consideration of their infirmities, so as that every transgression in the covenant shall not throw them out of covenant; he will gather with everlasting loving-kindness. (3.) In faithfulness; every article of the covenant shall be punctually performed; faithful is he that has called them, who also will do it, he cannot deny himself. (4.) The means by which they shall be kept tight and faithful to the covenant on their part; thou shalt know the Lord. Which is not only a promise, that God will reveal himself to them more fully and clearly than ever, but that he will give them a heart to know him; they shall know more of him, and shall know him in another manner than ever yet. The ground of their apostasy was, not knowing God to be their benefactor, ver. 8. therefore to prevent the like, they shall all be taught of God to know him. Note, God keeps up his interest in mens souls, by giving them a good understanding, and a right knowledge of things, Heb. viii. 11.

5. That tho' the heavens had been to them as brass, and the earth as iron, now the heavens shall yield their dews, and by that means the earth its fruits. Ver. 21, 22. God having betrothed the gospel church, and in it all believers to himself, how shall he not with himself, and with his Son, freely give them all things; all things pertaining both to life and godliness, all things they need or can desire? All is theirs, for they are Christ's, betrothed to him; and with the righteousness of the kingdom of God, which they seek first, all other things shall be added unto them. And yet this promise of corn and wine is to be taken also in a spiritual sense; (so the learned Dr Pocock thinks) it is an effusion of those blessings and graces which relate to the soul, that is here promised under the metaphor of temporal blessings; the dew of heaven, as well as the fatness of the earth, and that put first, as in the blessing of Jacob, Gen. xxvii. 28. God hath threatened, ver. 9. that he would take away the corn and the wine, but now he promiseth to restore them again, and that in the common course and order of nature. While they lay under the judgment of famine, they called to the earth for corn and wine, for the support of themselves and their families; very gladly would the earth have supplied them, but cannot give unless she receive, cannot produce corn and wine, unless it be enriched with the river of God, Psal. lxxv. 9. And therefore calls to the heavens for rain, the former and latter rain in their season, gapes for it, and by its melancholy aspect when rain is denied, pleads for it; but, say the heavens, we have no rain to give, unless he, who hath the key of the clouds unlock them, and open these bottles, so that if the Lord do not help you, we cannot. But when God takes them into covenant with himself, then the wheel of nature shall be set a-going again in favour of them, and the streams of mercy shall flow in the usual channel. Then I will hear, saith the Lord, I will receive your prayers, so the Chaldee interprets the first hearing. God will graciously take notice of their addresses to him. And then I will hear the heavens; I will answer them, so it may be read, and then they shall hear and answer the earth, and pour down seasonable rain upon it, and then the earth shall bear the corn and vines, and supply them with moisture, and they shall bear Jezreel, and be nourishment and refreshment for them that inhabit Jezreel. See here the coherence of second causes with one another, as links in a chain, and the necessary dependence they all have upon God the first cause. Note, We must expect all our comforts from God in the usual method, and by the appointed means; and when we are at any time disappointed in them, we must look up to God, above the hills and the mountains, Psal. cxxi. 1, 2. See how ready the creatures are to serve the people of God, how desirous of the honour; the corn cries to the earth, the earth to the heavens, the heavens to God, and all that they may supply them. And see how ready God is to give relief, I will hear, saith the Lord, yea, I will hear. And if God will hear the cry of the heavens for his people, much more will he hear the intercession of his Son for them, who is made higher than the heavens. See what a peculiar delight those that are in covenant with God may take in their creature-comforts, as seeing them all come to them from the hand of God; they can run up all the streams to the fountain, and taste covenant love in common mercies, which makes them doubly sweet.

6. That whereas they were now dispersed, not only as Simeon and Levi, divided in Jacob, and scattered in Israel, but divided and scattered all the world over, God will turn this curse, as he did that, into a blessing; I will not only water the earth for her, but will sow her unto me in the earth; her dispersion shall be not like that of the chaff in the floor, which the wind driveth away, but like that of the seed in the field, in order to its greater increase; wherever they are scattered they shall take root downwards, and bear fruit upwards. The good seed are the children of the kingdom. I will sow her unto me. This alludes to the

name Jezreel, which signifies *sown of God*, or *for God*; as she was scattered of him (which is one signification of the words) so she shall be sown of him, and to what he sows, he will give the increase. When in all parts of the world Christianity got footing, and every where there were professors of it, then this promise was fulfilled, *I will sow her unto me in the earth*. Note, The greatest blessing of this earth is, that God has a church in it, and from that ariseth all the tribute of glory he hath out of it; it is what he hath *sown to himself*, and what he will therefore secure to himself.

7. That whereas they had been Lo-ammi and Lo-ruhamah, not a people, and not finding mercy with God, now they shall be restored to his favour, and taken again into covenant with him, *ver. 23*. They had not obtained mercy, but seemed to be abandoned, they were *not my people*, not distinguished, not dealt with as my people, but left to lie in common with the nations; this was the case of the rejected Jews, and the same, or more deplorable, was that of the Gentile world, to whom the apostle applies this, *Rom. ix. 24, 25*. that had *no hope*, and were *without God in the world*; but when great multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles were upon their believing in Christ incorporated into a church Christian; then (1.) God had *mercy* on those who had not obtained mercy. Those found favour with God, and became the children of his love, who had been long out of favour, and the children of his wrath, and if infinite mercy had not interposed, would have been for ever so. Note, God's mercy must not be despaired of any where on this side hell. (2.) He took those into a covenant-relation to himself, who had been strangers and foreigners. He saith to them, *Thou art my people*, whom I will own and bless, protect and provide for; and they shall say, *Thou art my God*, whom I will serve and worship, and to whose honour I will be entirely and for ever devoted. Note, 1. The sum total of the happiness of believers, is the mutual relation that is between them and God, that he is theirs and they are his; this is the crown of all the promises. 2. This relation is founded in free grace; we have not *chosen him*, but he hath *chosen us*. He first saith they are *my people*, and makes them willing to be so in the day of his power, and then they avouch him to be theirs. 3. As we need desire no more to make us happy, but to be the people of God, so we need desire no more to make us easy and cheerful, but to have him to assure us that we are so, to say unto us, by his Spirit witnessing with ours, *Thou art my people*. 4. Those that have accepted of the Lord for their God, must avouch him to be so, must go to him in prayer, and tell him so, *Thou art my God*, and must be ready to make profession before men. 5. It adds to the comfort of our covenant with God, that in it there is a communion of saints; who tho' they are many, yet here they are one. It is not, I will say to them, *ye are my people*, but *thou art*; for he looks upon them as all one in Christ, and as such in him, he speaks to them, and covenants with them; and they also do not say, *Thou art our God*, for they look upon themselves as one body, and desire with one mind, and one mouth to glorify him, and therefore say, *Thou art my God*. Or, it intimates, that such a covenant as God made of old with his people Israel in general, now under the gospel he makes with particular believers, and saith to each of them, even the meanest, with as much pleasure as he did of old to the thousands of Israel, *Thou art my people*, and invites and encourageth each of them to say, *Thou art my God*, and to triumph therein, as Moses and all Israel did, *Exod. xv. 2*. He is *my God*, and *my fathers God*.

C H A P. III.

God is still by the prophet inculcating the same thing upon this careless people, and much in the same manner as before, by a type or sign, that of the dealings of a husband with an adulterous wife. In this chapter we have (1.) The bad character which the people of Israel now had, they were, as is said of the Athenians (*Acts xvii. 16*.) wholly given to idolatry, *ver. 1*. (2.) The low condition which they should be reduced to by their captivity, and other the instances of God's controversy with them, *ver. 2, 3, 4*. (3.) The blessed reformation that should at length be wrought upon them, in the latter days, *ver. 5*.

1. **T**hen said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman (beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress) according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods, and love flagons of wine. 2. So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half-homer of barley. 3. And I said unto her, Thou shalt abide for me many days, thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee. 4. For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a

king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. 5. Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king, and shall fear the LORD, and his goodness in the latter days.

Some think this chapter refers to Judah, the two tribes, as the adulteress the prophet married, *chap. i. 3*. represented the ten tribes; for this was not to be divorced, as the ten tribes were, but to be left desolate for a long time, and then to return as the two tribes did; but these are called the children of Israel, which was the ten tribes, and therefore it is more probable that of them this parable, as well as that before, is to be understood. Go and repeat it, saith God, to the prophet; Go yet again. Note, For the conviction and reduction of sinners, it is necessary that precept be upon precept, and line upon line. If they will not believe one sign, try another, *Exod. iv. 8, 9*.

Now in this parable, we may observe,

1. God's goodness and Israel's badness, strangely serving for a foil to each other, *ver. 1*. Israel is as a woman beloved of her friend, either of him that has married her, or of him that only courts her, and yet an adulteress; such is the case between God and Israel. We say of those whose affection is mutual, that there is *no love lost* between them; but here we find a great deal of the love, even of God himself, lost and thrown away upon an unworthy ungrateful people. The God of Israel retains a very great love for the children of Israel, and yet they are an evil and adulterous generation. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth; (1.) That God's goodness has not put an end to their badness; the Lord loves them, has a kindness for them, and is continually shewing kindness to them, they know it, they cannot but own it, that he has been as a friend and father to them; and yet they looked to other gods, gods that they can see, and to the love of which they are drawn by the eye, they look to them, with an eye of adoration, they offer up all their services to them; and with an eye of dependence they expect all their comforts from them; if they were restrained from bowing the knee to idols, yet they gave them an amorous glance, and had eyes full of that spiritual adultery. And they love flagons of wine; they therefore joined with idolaters because they lived merrily, and drank hard; they had a kindness for other gods for the sake of the plenty of good wine, with which they had been sometimes treated in their temples. Idolatry and sensuality commonly go together; those that make a god of their belly, as drunkards do, will easily be brought to make a god of any thing else. God's priests were to drink no wine, when they went in to minister, and his Nazarites none at all. But the worshippers of other gods drank wine in bowls, nay, no less than flagons of wine would content them.

(2.) That their badness had not put an end to God's goodness, and stopped the current of his favours to them. This is a wonder of mercy indeed, that she is thus beloved of her friend, tho' an adulteress; such is the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel. Go, saith God, love such a woman, see if thou canst find in thy heart to do it; no, thou canst not, the breast of no man would admit such a love, yet such is my love to the children of Israel; it is love to the loveless, to the unlovely, to those that have a thousand times forfeited it. Note, In God's good will to poor sinners, his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, and his love is more condescending and compassionate than ours is, or can be; in this as much as any thing, he is God and not man, *Hos. xi. 9*.

2. The method found for the bringing of a God so very good, and the people so very bad together again; this is the thing aimed at, and what God aims at he will accomplish; to our great surprise, we find a breach thus wide as the sea effectually healed; miracles cease not so long as divine mercy doth not cease. Observe here,

1. The course God takes to humble them and make them know themselves, *ver. 2*. I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and a homer and a half of barley, i. e. I courted her to be reconciled, to leave her ill courses, and return to her first husband, as *chap. ii. 14*. I allured her and spake comfortably to her; as the Levite went after his concubine that had played the harlot from him, and was run away with another man, he spake friendly to her, *Judg. xix. 3*. But here the present which the prophet brought her for the purchasing of her favour, is observed to be a very small one, but it was all that was intended for her separate maintenance, and in it she is reduced to a short allowance, and to punish her for her pride, is made to look very mean. When Sampson went to be reconciled to his wife that had dishonoured him, he visited her with a kid, *Judg. xv. 1*. which was a genteel entertainment. But the prophet here visited his wife with fifteen pieces of silver, a small sum, which yet she must be content to live upon a great while, so long as till her husband thought fit to restore her to her first estate. She shall also have a homer and a half of barley, for bread-corn, and that is all she must expect, till she be sufficiently humbled, and by a competent

time of trial, satisfactory proof given that she is indeed reformed. Let her be made sensible that it is not for her own merit that her husband makes court to her, it is but at a lame price that he values her; the price of a servant was thirty shekels, *Exod. xxi. 32.* This was but half so much; yet let her know it is more than she is worth. God had given Egypt for Israel's ransom once, so precious were they then in his sight, and so honourable, *Isa. xliii. 3, 4.* But now they have gone a whoring from him, he will give but fifteen pieces of silver for them, so much have they lost in their value by their iniquity. Note, Those whom God designs honour and comfort for, he first makes sensible of their own worthlessness, and brings them to acknowledge with the prodigal, *I am no more worthy to be called thy son.* Time was when Israel was fed with the finest of the wheat, but they grew wanton, and loved flagons of wine, and therefore in order to the humbling and reducing of them, they must be brought in the land of their captivity to eat barley bread, and be thankful they can get it, and to eat that too by weight and measure, whereas they did not use to be stinted. Note, Poverty and disgrace sometimes prove a happy means of making great sinners true penitents.

2. The new terms upon which God is willing to come with them, *ver. 3. Thou shalt abide for me many days, and shalt not be for another, so will I be for thee.* He might justly have given them a bill of divorce, and have resolved to have no more to do with them, but he is willing to shew them kindness, and that the matter should be compromised; he deals not with them in strict justice, according to the rigour of the law, but according to the multitude of his mercies; and it represents God's gracious dealings with the apostate race of mankind, that had gone a whoring from him; he bought them indeed with an inestimable price, not for their honour, but for the honour of his own justice; and now this is the proposal he makes to them, the covenant of grace he is willing to enter into with them, they must be to him a people, and he will be to them a God; the same with the proposal here made to Israel.

1. They must take to themselves the shame of their apostasy from him, must submit to, and accept of, the punishment of their iniquity. *Thou shalt abide for me many days in solitude and silence,* as a widow that is desolate, and in sorrow; they must lay aside their ornaments, and wait with patience and submission to know what God will do with them, and whether he will please to admit such unworthy wretches into his favour again, as they did, *Exod. xxxiii. 4, 5.* Their father, their husband, has spit in their face; (as God said concerning Miriam) hath put them under the marks of his displeasure, and therefore, like her, they must be ashamed seven days, and be shut out of the camp, *Numb. xii. 14.* till their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, *Lev. xxvi. 41.* Let them sit alone and keep silence, waiting for the salvation of the Lord, and in the mean time let them bear the yoke, *Lam. iii. 26, 27, 28.* Let them not expect that God should speedily return in mercy to them, as sometimes he has done, that comfort should come over-cheap, and easy to them, no, let them wait it, let them wait for it, many days, during all the days of their captivity, and reckon it a miracle of mercy, and well worth waiting for, if it come at last. Note, Those whom God designs mercy for, he will first bring to abase themselves, and to put a high value upon his favours.

2. They must never return to folly again; that is the condition upon which God will speak peace to his people, and to his saints, *Psal. lxxxv. 8.* and no other. *Thou shalt not play the harlot,* shalt not worship idols in the land of thy captivity, while thou art there set apart for thine uncleanness. Note, It is not enough to take shame to ourselves for the sins we have committed, and to justify God in correcting us for them, but we must resolve in the strength of God's grace that we will not offend any more; that we will not again go a whoring from God, after the world and the flesh. Blessed be God, tho' it is the law of the covenant, it is not the condition of it, that we shall never in any thing do amiss, but thou shalt not play the harlot, thou shalt not serve other gods, shalt not be for another man. In the land of their captivity, they would be courted to worship the idols of the country, that would be a trial to them, a long trial, many days, but if thou keep thy ground, and hold fast thine integrity, if when all this is come upon thee, yet thou dost not stretch out thy hand to a strange god, thou wilt be qualified for the returns of God's favour. Note, It is a certain sign that our afflictions are means of much good to us, and earnest of more, when we are kept by the grace of God, from being overcome by the temptations of an afflicted state.

3. Upon these terms their Maker will again be their husband; so will I also be for thee. This is the covenant between God and returning sinners, That if they will be for him to serve him, he will be for them to save them. Let them renounce and abjure all rivals with God for the throne in the heart, and devote themselves entirely to him, and him only, and he will be to them a God all-sufficient. If we be faithful and constant to God in a way of duty, and will never leave nor forsake him, he will be so to us in a way of mercy, and will never leave or forsake us. And a fairer proposal could not be made.

No. LXXIII.

Now in the two last verses, we have the reddition of the parable, and the application of it to Israel.

1. They must long sit like a widow, stripped of all their joys and honours, *Lam. iv. 1, 2. They shall abide many days, without a king, and without a prince, &c.* and a nation in this condition may well be called a widow. They want the blessing, (1.) Of civil government; they shall abide without a king, and without a prince of their own. There were kings and princes over them to oppress them, and rule them with rigour, but they had no king or prince to protect them, to fight their battles for them, and administer justice to them, and to take care of their common safety and welfare. Note, Magistracy is a very great blessing to a people, and it is a sad and sore judgment to want it. (2.) Of publick worship; they shall abide without a sacrifice, and without an image, (or a statue or pillar; it is used concerning the pillars Jacob erected, *Gen. xxviii. 18.—xxxii. 25.—xxxv. 20.*) and without an ephod and teraphim. The teraphim being here closely joined to the ephod, some think the urim and thummim were meant by it, in the breast-plate of the high-priest. The meaning is, that in their captivity they should not only have no face of a nation upon them, but no face of a church; they should not have (as a learned expositor speaks) liberty of any publick profession or exercise of religion, either true or false, according to their choice. They shall have no sacrifice or altar, so the LXX, and therefore no sacrifice because no altar. They shall have no ephod, or teraphim, no legal priesthood, no means of knowing God's mind, no oracle to consult in doubtful cases; but shall be all in the dark. Note, The case of those is very melancholy, that are deprived of all opportunities to worship God in publick. This was the case of the Jews in their captivity; and is so far the case of the scattered Jews at this day, that tho' they have their synagogues, they have no temple-service. Desolate indeed is their condition, that are shut out from communion with God, that have no opportunity of directing their addresses to God by sacrifice and altar, and of receiving instructions from him by ephod and teraphim.

2. They shall at length be received again as a wife, *ver. 5. afterwards,* in process of time, when they have gone thro' this discipline, they shall return, i. e. they shall repent of their idolatries and forsake them, they shall apply themselves to God, and adhere to him, and herein they shall be accepted of him. Two things are here promised as instances of their return, and steps towards their acceptance with God in their return.

1. The enquiries they shall make after God. *They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king.* Note, Those that would find God, and find favour with him must seek him; must ask after him, covet acquaintance with him, desire to be reconciled to him, set their love on him, and labour in this that they may be accepted of him. Their seeking him implies that they had lost him, that they were lamenting their loss, and that they were solicitous to retrieve what they had lost. They shall seek him as their God, for should not a people seek unto their God? And they shall seek David their king; who can be no other, but the Messiah our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the root and offspring of David, whom David himself called Lord, *Psal. cx. 1.* and to whom God gave the throne of his father David, *Luke i. 32.* The Chaldee reads it, they shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah the son of David their king. Compare this with *Jer. xxx. 9. Ezek. xxxii. 23.—xxxvii. 25.* Note, Those that would seek the Lord so as to find him, must apply themselves to Jesus Christ, and must seek to him as their king, and become his willing people, and take an oath of fealty and allegiance to him.

2. The reverence they shall have of God; they shall fear the Lord and his goodness; some by his goodness here understand the temple, towards which they shall look in worshipping God. The Jews say, there were three things which Israel cast off in the days of Rehoboam, the kingdom of heaven, the family of David, and the house of the sanctuary, and it will never be well with them till they return, and seek them all three, which is here promised; they shall seek the kingdom of heaven in the Lord their God, the royal family in David their king, and the temple in the goodness of the Lord. Others by his goodness understand Christ; the same with David their king, but it is rather to be taken for that attribute of God, which he shewed as his glory, and by which he proclaimed his name. Note, It is not only the Lord and his greatness that we are to fear, but the Lord and his goodness, not only his majesty, but his mercy. They shall flee for fear to the Lord and his goodness, (so some take it) shall flee to it as their city of refuge. We must fear God's goodness, i. e. we must admire it, and stand amazed at it, must adore it, and worship as Moses did at the proclaiming of this name, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* We must be afraid of offending his goodness, of making any ungrateful returns for it, and so forfeiting it. There is forgiveness with God that he may be feared, *Psal. cxxx. 4.* We must rejoice with trembling in the goodness of God, must not be high-minded but fear.

Now this promise had its accomplishment, when by the gospel of Christ great multitudes, both of Jews and Gentiles, were brought home to God, and incorporated in the New Testament church; served God in Christ, with a filial fear of divine grace, and were accepted of God as his Israel. And some think it is to be

yet further accomplished in the conversion of those Jews to the faith of Christ, who shall remain in unbelief; when they shall seek their Messiah, as *David their king*, and by him *all Israel shall be saved*, when the *fulfness of the Gentiles is brought in*. Time was when they sought him to put him to death, saying, *We have no king but Cæsar*, but the day is coming when they shall seek him to *appoint him their head*, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that hath here promised they shall do it, will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time; in the *latter days of the last times*, the times of the Messiah; but alas, who shall live when God doth this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation, I cannot say, but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

C H A P. IV.

Prophets were sent to be reprovers, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here as counsel for the King of kings, opening an indictment against the people of Israel, and labouring to convince them of sin, and of their misery and danger because of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. (1.) He shews them what were the grounds of God's controversy with them; a general prevalency of vice and profaneness, ver. 1, 2. ignorance and forgetfulness of God, ver. 6, 7. the worldly mindedness of the priests, ver. 8. drunkenness and uncleanness, ver. 11. using divination, and witchcraft, ver. 12. offering sacrifice in the high places, ver. 13. whoredoms, ver. 14, 18. and bribery among magistrates, ver. 18. (2.) He shews them what would be the consequences of God's controversy, God will punish them for these things, ver. 9. The whole land should be laid waste, ver. 3. all sorts of people cut off, ver. 5. their honour lost, ver. 7. their creature-comforts unsatisfying, ver. 10, and themselves made ashamed, ver. 19. And which is several times mentioned here as the worst judgment of all, they should be let alone in their sins, ver. 17. they shall not reprove one another, ver. 4. God will not punish them, ver. 14. Nay, he will let them prosper, ver. 16. (3.) He gives warning to Judah not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw the steps went down to hell, ver. 15.

1. **H**EAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*. 2. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. 4. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. 5. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

Here is, 1. The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel*, for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear. Whom may God expect to give him a *fair hearing*, and to take from him a *fair warning*, but the children of Israel, his own professing people; yea, they will be ready enough to hear, when God speaks comfortably to them, but are they willing to hear when he hath a *controversy* with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge. *The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, of this land, of this holy land*. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker, it sows discord between God and Israel. God fees sin in his own people, and a *good action* he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him; and for an ungrateful return to him for his favours. God's controversy will be *pleaded*; pleaded by the judgments of his mouth, before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand; that he may be justified in all he doth, and may make it appear he desires not the death of sinners; and God's *pleadings* ought to be attended to, for sooner or later they shall have a *hearing*.

2. The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked. (1.) They are charged with *national omissions* of the most important duties; *there is no truth nor mercy; neither justice,*

nor charity; these most weighty matters of the law, as our Saviour accounts them, *Matth. xxiii. 23. judgment, mercy, and faith*. The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called *honesty*; they made no conscience of what they said and did, tho' never so contrary to the truth, and injurious to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of *mercy*, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange there is no *truth and mercy*, when there is no *knowledge of God in the land*; what good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God? It was the privilege of *that land*, that in *Israel God was made known*, and his *name great*, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did not *know him*, *Psal. lxxvi. 1.* (2.) Hence follow *national commissions* of the most enormous sins, against both the first and second table, for they had no regard at all to either. *Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery*, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all corners of the land, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, *ver. 2.* The corruption was universal, what good people there were among them were either lost or hid, or hid themselves. By these they *break out*, i. e. they transgress all bounds of reason and conscience, and the divine law, *they have exceeded*, *Job xxxvi. 9.* they have been *overmuch wicked*, *Eccl. vii. 17.* they suffer their corruptions to break out, they themselves break over and break through all that stands in their way, and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing, and its power exorbitant; when mens hearts are *fully set in them to do evil*, (*Eccl. viii. 11.*) *what will be restrained from them?* *Gen. xi. 6.* When they break out thus, *blood touches blood*, i. e. abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country, and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. *Cædes aliæ aliis sunt contiguæ*; a stream of blood runs down among them, even royal blood; it was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown; Shallum slew Zecharia, and Menahem slew Shallum, Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contenders; so then the land was *polluted with blood*, *Psal. cvi. 38. it was filled with blood, from one end to the other*, *2 Kings xxi. 16.*

3. Sentence passed upon this guilty and polluted land, *ver. 3.* It shall be utterly destroyed, and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore *the whole land shall mourn*, under God's fore judgments: shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty: As the vallies are said to *shout for joy and sing*, when there is plenty and peace, so here they are said to *mourn*, when by war and famine they are made desolate. *The whole land shall be brimstone and salt, and burning*, as was threatned in the law, *Deut. xxix. 23.* They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts. *The land mourns*, when there is neither *grass for the cattle, nor herb for the service of man*; and then *every one that dwelleth therein shall languish* for want of nice food to support a wasting life, and fret for want of the usual dainties for delight. *The beasts of the field will languish*, *Jer. xiv. 5, 6.* Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great, that there shall not be picking for the *fowls of the air*, to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man, and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with wild-fowl. Nay, *the fishes of the sea shall be taken away, or gathered together*, that they may go away in shoals to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general, than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall: It was part of one of the plagues of Egypt, that he *slew their fish*, *Psal. cv. 29.* when the waters are dried, the *fish die*, *Isa. 1. 2.* *Zeph. i. 2, 3.* Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. O what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that tho' there is in it so much swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl on our tables!

4. An order of court, that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal, to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Observe,

1. The order itself, *ver. 4. yet let no man strive or reprove another*, i. e. let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them, let their physicians give them up as desperate, and past cure. It intimates, that as long as there is any hope, we ought to reprove sinners, for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another, to give and take reproofs, it was one of the laws of Moses, *Lev. xix. 17. thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour*, it is an instance of brotherly love; sometimes there is need to *rebuke sharply*, not only to *reprove*, but to *strive*, so loth are men to part with their sins: But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin, when God saith, *let them not be reprovèd*. Yet this is to be understood as God's commands sometimes to the prophets, not to *pray for them*, notwithstanding which, they did pray for them; but the meaning is, they are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose, either to deal with them, or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silenced, and when those who should witness against the sins of

of the times, retire into a corner, and give up the cause. See 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

2. The reasons of this order, let them not reprove one another; for (1.) They are determined to go on in sin, and no reproofs will cure them of that. *Thy people are as they that strive with the priest*, i. e. they are grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself, if he should but give them the least check, without any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought they should take a reproof from a private person? Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened, that quarrel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Joash king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. He was a priest, with him they strove, when he was officiating between the temple and the altar; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case, when he spoke, ver. 2. of blood touching blood, the blood of the sacrificer was mingled with the blood of the sacrifice, that (saith he) was the apex of their wickedness, from thence their ruin was to be dated, Mat. xxiii. 35. as this is of their incorrigibility, that they are as those who strive with the priest, therefore let no man reprove them; for (2.) God also is determined to proceed in their ruin, ver. 5. therefore, because thou wilt take no reproof, no advice, thou shalt fall, and it is in vain for any to think of preventing it, for the decree is gone forth. Thou shalt stumble and fall in the day, and the prophet, the false prophet that flattered and seduced thee, shall fall with thee in the night, i. e. both thou and thy prophet, shall fall night and day, shall be continually falling into one calamity or other; the darkness of the night shall not help to cover thee from trouble, nor the light of the day help thee to flee from it. The prophets are blind leaders, and the people blind followers, and to the blind day and night are alike; so that whether it be day or night, both shall fall together into the ditch. Thou shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself, and thou art very secure; and in the night, when it will be seen and observed by others, and turn most to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible. Note, The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others, will, in a special manner, be intolerable. And did the children think, when they were in danger of falling, their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for I will destroy thy mother; Samaria, the mother city; the whole state or kingdom, which is as a mother to every part. It shall all be made silent. Note, When all are involved in guilt, nothing less can be expected, but that all should be involved in ruin.

6. ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. 7. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. 8. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. 9. And there shall be like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. 10. For they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11. Whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart.

God is here proceeding in his controversy, both with the priests, and with the people; the people were as those that strove with the priests, ver. 4. when they had priests that did their duty; but the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty, and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, Jer. v. ult. And it is observable here, how the punishment answers the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over against the other.

1. The people strove with the priests that should have taught them the knowledge of God justly, therefore are they destroyed for lack of knowledge, ver. 6. Note, Those that rebel against the light, can expect no other but to perish in the dark. Or, it is a charge upon the priests who should have been still teaching the people knowledge, (Eccl. xii. 9.) but they did not, or did it in such a manner, that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was no knowledge of God in the land; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people perished, Prov. xxix. 18. Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the mother of destruction; lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are my people that are thus destroyed; their relation to God as his people, aggravates both their sin in not taking pains to get the knowledge of that God, whose command they were under, and with whom they were taken into covenant; and

their sin likewise, who should have taught them; God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them, nor took any pains with them.

2. Both priests and people rejected knowledge, and justly therefore will God reject them. The reason why the people did not learn, and the priests did not teach, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it; not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God, and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they rejected it. They desired not the knowledge of God's ways, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light; and therefore I will also reject thee, I will refuse to take cognizance of thee, and to own thee; you will not know me, but bid me depart, I will therefore say, Depart from me, I know you not. Thou shalt be no priest to me. (1.) The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, Ezek. xlv. 13. Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers; but that which they seem to have, should be taken away, Luke viii. 18. (2.) The people shall be no longer as they have been a kingdom of priests, in royal priesthood, Exod. xix. 6. God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour, and profane their own crown.

3. They forgot the law of God, neither desired nor endeavoured, to retain it in mind, nor transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God forget them, and their children; the people's children, they did not educate them as they ought to have done in the knowledge of God, and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children when they are young, to remember their Creator, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or, it may be meant of the priests' children, they shall not succeed them in the priests' office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house, 1 Sam. ii. 20.

4. They dishonoured God with that which was their honour, and justly therefore will God strip them of it, ver. 7. It was their honour that they were increased, in number, wealth, power, and dignity, the beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time, it greatly increased, and grew very considerable; the family of the priests increased wonderfully; but as they were increased, so they sinned against God; the more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed, and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power, did but make them the more daring in sin. Therefore, (saith God) will I change their glory into shame; Is their numbers their glory? God will diminish them, and make them few. Is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them, and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their priests shall be made contemptible and base, Mal. ii. 9. Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will sooner or later be turned into shame to us; for they that despise God, shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. ii. 30.

5. The priests eat up the sin of God's people, and therefore they shall eat, and not have enough. (1.) They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priests; to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to the mock-priests of the calves, by their constitution; ver. 8. They eat up the sin of my people, i. e. their sin-offerings; if it be meant of the priests of the calves, it intimates their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests, though they were no priests. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon their part of the offerings of the Lord, but forgot the work, for which they were so well paid; they set their hearts upon the people's iniquities, they lifted up their soul to them, i. e. they were glad when people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have their share of; the more sins, the more sacrifices, and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead of warning the people against sin, from the consideration of the sacrifices, which shewed them what an offence sin was to God, since it needed such an expiation, they emboldened and encouraged the people to sin, since an atonement might be made at so small an expence. Thus they glutted themselves upon the sins of the people, and helped to keep up that which they should have beaten down. Note, It is a very wicked thing to be well-pleased with the sins of others, because some way or other, they may turn to our advantage. (2.) God will therefore deny them his blessing upon their maintenance. Ver. 10. They shall eat, and not have enough. Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it. Note, What is unlawfully gained, cannot be comfortably used; no, nor that which is inordinately coveted; it is just that the desires that are insatiable, should always be unsatisfied; and that those should never have enough, who never know when they have enough. See Mic. vi. 14. Hag. i. 6.

6. The

yet further accomplished in the conversion of those Jews to the faith of Christ, who shall remain in unbelief; when they shall seek their Messiah, as *David their king*, and by him *all Israel shall be saved*, when the *fulfness of the Gentiles is brought in*. Time was when they sought him to put him to death, saying, *We have no king but Cæsar*, but the day is coming when they shall seek him to *appoint him their head*, and to lay their necks under his yoke. He that hath here promised they shall do it, will enable them to do it, and bring about this great work in his own way and time; in the *latter days of the last times*, the times of the Messiah; but alas, who shall live when God doth this? How far we are to expect a general conversion of that nation, I cannot say, but I am sure we ought to pray that the Jews may be converted.

C H A P. IV.

Prophets were sent to be reprovers, to tell people of their faults, and to warn them of the judgments of God, to which by sin they exposed themselves; so the prophet is employed in this and the following chapters. He is here as counsel for the King of kings, opening an indictment against the people of Israel, and labouring to convince them of sin, and of their misery and danger because of sin, that he might prevail with them to repent and reform. (1.) He shews them what were the grounds of God's controversy with them; a general prevalency of vice and profaneness, ver. 1, 2. ignorance and forgetfulness of God, ver. 6, 7. the worldly mindedness of the priests, ver. 8. drunkenness and uncleanness, ver. 11. using divination, and witchcraft, ver. 12. offering sacrifice in the high places, ver. 13. whoredoms, ver. 14, 18. and bribery among magistrates, ver. 18. (2.) He shews them what would be the consequences of God's controversy, God will punish them for these things, ver. 9. The whole land should be laid waste, ver. 3. all sorts of people cut off, ver. 5. their honour lost, ver. 7. their creature-comforts unsatisfying, ver. 10, and themselves made ashamed, ver. 19. And which is several times mentioned here as the forest judgment of all, they should be let alone in their sins, ver. 17. they shall not reprove one another, ver. 4. God will not punish them, ver. 14. Nay, he will let them prosper, ver. 16. (3.) He gives warning to Judah not to tread in the steps of Israel, because they saw the steps went down to hell, ver. 15.

1. **H**EAR the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because *there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*. 2. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood. 3. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away. 4. Yet let no man strive, nor reprove another: for thy people are as they that strive with the priest. 5. Therefore shalt thou fall in the day, and the prophet also shall fall with thee in the night, and I will destroy thy mother.

Here is, 1. The court set, and both attendance and attention demanded. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel*, for to you is the word of this conviction sent, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear. Whom may God expect to give him a *fair hearing*, and to take from him a *fair warning*, but the children of Israel, his own professing people; yea, they will be ready enough to hear, when God speaks comfortably to them, but are they willing to hear when he hath a *controversy* with them? Yes, they must hear him when he pleads against them, when he has something to lay to their charge. *The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, of this land, of this holy land*. Note, Sin is the great mischief-maker, it sows discord between God and Israel. God sees sin in his own people, and a *good action* he has against them for it. Some more particular actions lie against his own people, which do not lie against other sinners. He has a controversy with them for breaking covenant with him, for bringing a reproach upon him; and for an ungrateful return to him for his favours. God's controversy will be *pleaded*; pleaded by the judgments of his mouth, before they are pleaded by the judgments of his hand; that he may be justified in all he doth, and may make it appear he desires not the death of sinners; and God's *pleadings* ought to be attended to, for sooner or later they shall have a *hearing*.

2. The indictment read, by which the whole nation stands charged with crimes of a heinous nature, by which God is highly provoked. (1.) They are charged with *national omissions* of the most important duties; *there is no truth nor mercy; neither justice,*

nor charity; these most weighty matters of the law, as our Saviour accounts them, *Matth. xxiii. 23. judgment, mercy, and faith*. The generality of the people seemed to have no sense at all of the thing called *honesty*; they made no conscience of what they said and did, tho' never so contrary to the truth, and injurious to their neighbour. Much less had they any sense of *mercy*, or any obligation they were under to pity and help the poor. And it is not strange there is no *truth and mercy*, when there is no *knowledge of God in the land*; what good can be expected where there is no knowledge of God? It was the privilege of *that land*, that in *Israel God was made known*, and his *name great*, which was an aggravation of their sin, that they did not *know him*, *Psal. lxxvi. 1*. (2.) Hence follow *national commissions* of the most enormous sins, against both the first and second table, for they had no regard at all to either. *Swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery*, against the third, ninth, sixth, eighth, and seventh commandments, were to be found in all corners of the land, and among all orders and degrees of men among them, *ver. 2*. The corruption was universal, what good people there were among them were either lost or hid, or hid themselves. By these they *break out*, i. e. they transgress all bounds of reason and conscience, and the divine law, *they have exceeded*, *Job xxxvi. 9*. they have been *overmuch wicked*, *Eccl. vii. 17*. they suffer their corruptions to break out, they themselves break over and break through all that stands in their way, and would stop them in their sinful career, as water overflows the banks. Note, Sin is a violent thing, and its power exorbitant; when mens hearts are *fully set in them to do evil*, (*Eccl. viii. 11*.) *what will be restrained from them?* *Gen. xi. 6*. When they break out thus, *blood touches blood*, i. e. abundance of murders are committed in all parts of the country, and, as it were, in a constant series and succession. *Cædes aliæ aliis sunt contiguæ*; a stream of blood runs down among them, even royal blood; it was about this time that there was so much blood shed in grasping at the crown; Shallum slew Zecharia, and Menahem slew Shallum, Pekah slew Pekahiah, and Hoshea slew Pekah; and the like bloody work, it is likely, there was among other contenders; so then the land was *polluted with blood*, *Psal. cvi. 38*. *it was filled with blood, from one end to the other*, *2 Kings xxi. 16*.

3. Sentence passed upon this guilty and polluted land, *ver. 3*. It shall be utterly destroyed, and laid waste. The whole land is infected with sin, and therefore *the whole land shall mourn*, under God's fore judgments: shall sit in mourning, being stripped of all its wealth and beauty: As the vallies are said to *shout for joy and sing*, when there is plenty and peace, so here they are said to *mourn*, when by war and famine they are made desolate. *The whole land shall be brimstone and salt, and burning*, as was threatned in the law, *Deut. xxix. 23*. They had broken all God's commandments, and now God threatens to take away all their comforts. *The land mourns*, when there is neither *grass for the cattle, nor herb for the service of man*; and then *every one that dwelleth therein shall languish* for want of nice food to support a wasting life, and fret for want of the usual dainties for delight. *The beasts of the field will languish*, *Jer. xiv. 5, 6*. Nay, the destruction of the fruits of the earth shall be so great, that there shall not be picking for the *fowls of the air*, to keep them alive; they shall suffer with man, and their dying, or growing lean, will be a punishment to those who used to have their tables replenished with wild-fowl. Nay, *the fishes of the sea shall be taken away, or gathered together*, that they may go away in shoals to some other coast, and then the fishing trade will be worth nothing. This desolation shall be in that respect more general, than that by Noah's flood, for that did not affect the fishes of the sea, but this shall: It was part of one of the plagues of Egypt, that he *slew their fish*, *Psal. cv. 29*. when the waters are dried, the *fish die*, *Isa. l. 2*. *Zeph. i. 2, 3*. Note, When man becomes disobedient to God, it is just that the inferior creatures should be made unserviceable to man. O what reason have we to admire God's patience and mercy to our land, that tho' there is in it so much swearing and lying, and killing, and stealing, and adultery, yet there is plenty of flesh, and fish, and fowl on our tables!

4. An order of court, that no pains should be taken with the condemned criminal, to bring him to repentance, with the reason for that order. Observe,

1. The order itself, *ver. 4*. *yet let no man strive or reprove another*, i. e. let no means be used to reduce and reclaim them, let their physicians give them up as desperate, and past cure. It intimates, that as long as there is any hope, we ought to reprove sinners, for their sins; it is a duty we owe to one another, to give and take reproofs, it was one of the laws of Moses, *Lev. xix. 17*. *thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour*, it is an instance of brotherly love; sometimes there is need to *rebuke sharply*, not only to *reprove*, but to *strive*, so loth are men to part with their sins: But it is a sign that persons and people are abandoned to ruin, when God saith, *let them not be reprovèd*. Yet this is to be understood as God's commands sometimes to the prophets, not to *pray for them*, notwithstanding which, they did pray for them; but the meaning is, they are so hardened in sin, and so ripened for ruin, that it will be to little purpose, either to deal with them, or to deal with God for them. Note, It bodes ill to a people when reprovers are silenced, and when those who should witness against the sins of

of the times, retire into a corner, and give up the cause. See 2 Chron. xxv. 16.

2. The reasons of this order, let them not reprove one another; for (1.) They are determined to *go on in sin*, and no reproofs will cure them of that. *Thy people are as they that strive with the priest*, i. e. they are grown so very impudent in sin, so very insolent and impatient of reproof, that they will fly in the face even of a priest himself, if he should but give them the least check, without any regard to his character and office; and how then can it be thought they should take a reproof from a private person? Note, Those sinners have their hearts wickedly hardened, that quarrel with their ministers for dealing faithfully with them; and those who rebel against ministerial reproof, which is an ordinance of God for their reformation, have forfeited the benefit of brotherly reproof too. Perhaps this may refer to the late wickedness of Joash king of Judah, and his people, who stoned Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, for delivering them a message from God, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21. He was a *priest*, with him they *strive*, when he was officiating *between the temple and the altar*; and Dr. Lightfoot thinks the prophet had an eye to his case, when he spoke, *ver. 2. of blood touching blood*, the blood of the *sacrificer* was mingled with the blood of the *sacrifice*, that (saith he) was the *apex of their wickedness*, from thence their ruin was to be dated, *Mat. xxiii. 35.* as this is of *their incorrigibility*, that they are as those who *strive with the priest*, therefore let no man reprove them; for (2.) God also is determined to *proceed in their ruin*, *ver. 5. therefore*, because thou wilt take no reproof, no advice, *thou shalt fall*, and it is in vain for any to think of preventing it, for the *decree is gone forth*. Thou shalt stumble and fall in the day, and the prophet, the false prophet that flattered and seduced thee, shall fall with thee in the night, i. e. both thou and thy prophet, shall fall night and day, shall be continually falling into one calamity or other; the darkness of the night shall not help to cover thee from trouble, nor the light of the day help thee to flee from it. The prophets are *blind leaders*, and the people *blind followers*, and to the blind day and night are alike; so that whether it be day or night, both shall fall together into the ditch. Thou shalt fall in the day, when thy fall is least feared by thyself, and thou art very secure; and in the night, when it will be seen and observed by others, and turn most to thy shame; and the prophet shall fall in the night, when to himself it will be most terrible. Note, The ruin of those who have helped to ruin others, will, in a special manner, be intolerable. And did the children think, when they were in danger of falling, their mother would help them? It shall be in vain to expect it, for *I will destroy thy mother*; Samaria, the mother city; the whole *state* or *kingdom*, which is as a mother to every part. It shall all be *made silent*. Note, When all are involved in guilt, nothing less can be expected, but that all should be involved in ruin.

6. ¶ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children. 7. As they were increased, so they sinned against me: therefore will I change their glory into shame. 8. They eat up the sin of my people, and they set their heart on their iniquity. 9. And there shall be like people, like priest: and I will punish them for their ways, and reward them their doings. 10. For they shall eat, and not have enough; they shall commit whoredom, and shall not increase: because they have left off to take heed to the LORD. 11. Whoredom, and wine, and new wine take away the heart.

God is here proceeding in his controversy, both with the priests, and with the people; *the people* were as those that *strive with the priests*, *ver. 4.* when they had priests that did their duty; but the generality of them lived in the neglect of their duty, and here is a word for those priests, and for the people that love to have it so, *Jer. v. ult.* And it is observable here, how the punishment answers the sin, and how, for the justifying of his own proceedings, God sets the one over against the other.

1. The people *strive with the priests* that should have taught them the knowledge of God justly, therefore are they *destroyed for lack of knowledge*, *ver. 6.* Note, Those that rebel against the light, can expect no other but to perish in the dark. Or, it is a charge upon the priests who should have been still *teaching the people knowledge*, (*Ecc. xii. 9.*) but they did not, or did it in such a manner, that it was as if they had not done it at all, so there was no knowledge of God in the land; and because there was no vision, or none to any purpose, the people *perished*, *Prov. xxix. 18.* Note, Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, that it is the mother of destruction; lack of knowledge is ruining to any person or people. They are *my people* that are thus *destroyed*; their relation to God as *his people*, aggravates both *their sin* in not taking pains to get the knowledge of that God, whose command they were under, and with whom they were taken into covenant; and

their sin likewise, who should have taught them; God set his children to school to them, and they never minded them, nor took any pains with them.

2. Both priests and people *rejected knowledge*, and justly therefore will God *reject them*. The reason why the people did not *learn*, and the priests did not *teach*, was not because they had not the light, but because they hated it; not because they had not ways of coming to the knowledge of God, and of communicating it, but because they had no heart to it; they *rejected it*. They *desired not the knowledge of God's ways*, but put it from them, and shut their eyes against the light; and therefore *I will also reject thee*, I will refuse to take cognizance of thee, and to own thee; you will not know me, but bid me *depart*, I will therefore say, *Depart from me, I know you not*. Thou shalt be *no priest to me*. (1.) The priests shall be no longer admitted to the privileges, or employed in the services of the priesthood, nor shall they ever be received again, as we find, *Ezek. xlv. 13.* Note, Ministers that reject knowledge, that are grossly ignorant and scandalous, ought not to be owned as ministers; but that which they *seem to have*, should be *taken away*, *Luke viii. 18.* (2.) The people shall be no longer as they have been a *kingdom of priests*, in royal priesthood, *Exod. xix. 6.* God's people, by rejecting knowledge, forfeit their honour, and profane their own crown.

3. They *forgot the law of God*, neither desired nor endeavoured, to retain it in mind, nor transmit the remembrance of it to their posterity, and therefore justly will God *forget them*, and *their children*; the *peoples children*, they did not educate them as they ought to have done in the knowledge of God, and their duty to him, and therefore God will disown them, as not in covenant with him. Note, If parents do not teach their children when they are young, to *remember their Creator*, they cannot expect that their Creator should remember them. Or, it may be meant of the *priests children*, they shall not succeed them in the priests office, but shall be reduced to poverty, as is threatened against Eli's house, *1 Sam. ii. 20.*

4. They *dishonoured God* with that which was *their honour*, and justly therefore will God strip them of it, *ver. 7.* It was their honour that *they were increased*, in number, wealth, power, and dignity, the beginning of their nation was small, but in process of time, it *greatly increased*, and grew very considerable; the family of the priests *increased wonderfully*; but *as they were increased, so they sinned against God*; the more populous the nation grew, the more sin was committed, and the more profane they were; their wealth, honour, and power, did but make them the more daring in sin. Therefore, (saith God) *will I change their glory into shame*; Is their numbers their glory? God will diminish them, and make them few. Is their wealth their glory? God will impoverish them, and bring them low; so that they shall themselves be ashamed of that which they gloried in. Their *priests* shall be made *contemptible and base*, *Mal. ii. 9.* Note, That which is our honour, if we dishonour God with it, will sooner or later be turned into shame to us; for *they that despise God, shall be lightly esteemed*, *1 Sam. ii. 30.*

5. The priests *eat up the sin of God's people*, and therefore *they shall eat, and not have enough*. (1.) They abused the maintenance that was allowed to the priests; to the priests of the house of Aaron, by the law of God, and to the mock-priests of the calves, by their constitution; *ver. 8.* *They eat up the sin of my people*, i. e. their sin-offerings; if it be meant of the priests of the calves, it intimates their seizing that which they had no right to; they usurped the revenues of the priests, though they were *no priests*. If it be meant of those who were legal priests, it intimates their greediness of the profits and perquisites of their office, when they took no care at all to do the duty of it. They feasted upon *their part* of the offerings of the Lord, but forgot the work, for which they were so *well paid*; they *set their hearts upon the peoples iniquities*, they *lifted up their soul* to them, i. e. they were glad when people did commit iniquity, that they might be obliged to bring an offering to make atonement for it, which they should have their share of; the more sins, the more sacrifices, and therefore they cared not how much sin people were guilty of. Instead of warning the people against sin, from the consideration of the sacrifices, which shewed them what an offence sin was to God, since it needed such an expiation, they emboldened and encouraged the people to sin, since an atonement might be made at so small an expence. Thus they *glutted themselves* upon the sins of the people, and helped to *keep up* that which they should have *beaten down*. Note, It is a very wicked thing to be well-pleased with the sins of others, because some way or other, they may turn to our advantage. (2.) God will therefore deny them his blessing upon their maintenance. *Ver. 10.* *They shall eat, and not have enough*. Though they have great plenty by the abundance of offerings that are brought in, yet they shall have no satisfaction in it. Either their food shall yield no good nourishment, or their greedy appetites shall not be satisfied with it. Note, What is *unlawfully* gained, cannot be *comfortably* used; no, nor that which is *inordinately* coveted; it is just that the desires that are *insatiable*, should always be *unsatisfied*; and that those should never *have enough*, who never know *when they have enough*. See *Mic. vi. 14.* *Hag. i. 6.*

6. The

6. The more they *increased*, the more they *sinned*, *ver. 7.* and therefore though they *commit whoredom*, though they take the most wicked methods to multiply their people, yet *they shall not increase*. Though they have many wives and concubines as Solomon had, yet they shall not have their families built up by it in a numerous progeny, no more than he had. Note, Those that hope any way to *increase* by unlawful means, will be disappointed. And therefore God will thus blast all their projects, *because they have left off to take heed to the Lord*; time was, when they had some regard to God, and to his authority over them, and interest in them, but they have *left it off*; they take no heed to his word, or to his providences, they do not eye him in either. They *forsake him*, so as not to take heed to him; they have apostatized to that degree, that they have no manner of regard to God, but are perfectly *without God in the world*. Note, Those that leave off to take heed to the Lord, leave off all good, and can expect no other but that all good should leave them.

7. The people and the priests did harden one another in sin, and therefore justly shall they be sharers in the punishment. *Ver. 9.* *There shall be like people, like priest.* So they were in character, people and priest were both alike ignorant and profane, regardless of God and their duty, and addicted to idolatry; and so they shall be in condition, God will bring judgments upon them that shall be the destruction both of priest and people; the famine that deprives the people of their meat, shall deprive the priests of their meat-offerings, Joel i. 9. It is part of the description of an universal desolation, that it shall be *as with the people, so with the priest*, Isa. xxiv. 2. God's judgments, when they come with commission, will make no difference. Note, Sharers in sin, must expect to be sharers in ruin. Thus God will *punish them both for their ways*, and *reward them their doings*. God will *cause their doings to return upon them*; so the word is; when a sin is committed, the sinner thinks it is gone, and he shall hear no more of it, but he shall find it *called over again*, and made to *return*, either to his humiliation or condemnation.

8. They indulged themselves in the delights of sense, to hold up their hearts, but they shall find that they *take away their hearts*, *ver. 11.* *Whoredom and wine, and new wine take away the heart.* Some join this with the foregoing words, *They have forsaken the Lord, to take heed to whoredom, and wine, and new wine*; Or, *because these have taken away their heart*. Their sensual pleasures have taken them off from their devotions, and drowned all that is good in them. Or, we may take it as a distinct sentence, containing a great truth we see confirmed by every day's experience; theft, drunkenness, and uncleanness, are sins that besot and infatuate men, weaken and enfeeble them. They take away both the understanding and the courage.

12. ¶ My people ask counsel at their stocks, and their staff declareth unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms hath caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. 13. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills under oaks, and poplars, and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. 14. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that doth not understand, shall fall. 15. ¶ Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend, and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Beth-aven, nor swear, The LORD liveth. 16. For Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place. 17. Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone. 18. Their drink is sowre: they have committed whoredom continually: her rulers with shame do love, Give ye. 19. The wind hath bound her up in her wings, and they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices.

In these verses we have, as before,

1. The sins charged upon the people of Israel; for which God had a controversy with them. And they are,

1. *Spiritual whoredom*, i. e. idolatry; they have in them a *spirit of whoredoms*, i. e. a strong inclination to that sin, the bent and bias of their hearts is that way, it is *their own iniquity*, they are carried out towards it with an unaccountable violence, and this *causeth them to err*. Note, The errors and mistakes of the judgment, are commonly owing to the corrupt affections; men therefore have a good opinion of sin, because they have a disposition towards it. And having such erroneous notions of idols, and such passionate motions towards them, no marvel, that with such a head, and such a heart, they have *gone a whoring*

from under their God, *ver. 12.* They ought to have been in subjection to him as their head and husband, to have been under his conduct and command, but they revolted from their allegiance, and put themselves under the conduct and protection of false gods. So, *ver. 15.* Israel has *played the harlot*; their carriage in the worship of their idols, was like that of a harlot, wanton and impudent. And, *ver. 16.* *Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer*; as an untamed heifer, so some; or, as a perverse or refractory one, so others; as a heifer that is turned loose, runs madly about the pasture; or if put under the yoke (which seems rather to be alluded to here) will *draw back* instead of *going forward*, will struggle to get her neck out of the yoke, and her feet out of the furrow. Thus unruly, ungovernable, untractable, were the people of Israel. They had begun to draw in the yoke of God's ordinances, but they drew back, as *children of Belial*, that will not endure the yoke; and when the prophets were sent with the goads of reproof, to put them forwards, they *kicked against the pricks*, and run backwards. The sum of all is, *ver. 17.* *Ephraim is joined by idols*, is perfectly wedded to them, his affections are glued to them, and his heart is upon them.

There are two instances given of their spiritual whoredom, in both which they gave that honour to their idols, which is due to God only. (1.) They consulted them as oracles, and used those arts of divination which they had learned from their idolatrous priests. *Ver. 12.* *My people ask counsel at their stocks*, their wooden gods; they apply themselves to them for advice and direction in what they should do, and for information concerning the event. They *say to a stock*, *Thou art my father*, Jer. ii. 27. and if it were indeed a father, it were worthy of *this honour*; but it was a great affront to God, who was indeed their Father, and whose lively oracles they had among them, with which they had liberty to consult at any time, thus to *ask counsel at their stocks*: And they expect that their *staff* should *declare to them* what course they should take, and what the event should be. It is probable, this refers to some wicked methods of divination, used among the Gentiles, and which the Jews learned from them, by a *piece of wood*, or by a *staff*, like Nebuchadnezzar's divining by his arrows; Ezek. xxi. 21. Note, Those who forsake the oracles of God, to take their measures from the world and the flesh, do in effect but consult with their stocks and their staves. (2.) They offered sacrifice to them as gods, whose favour they wanted, and whose wrath they dreaded and deprecated, *ver. 13.* *They sacrifice to them*, to atone and pacify them, and *burn incense to them*, to please and gratify them; and hope by both, to recommend themselves to them; God had pitched upon the place where he would record his name, but they having forsaken that, chose places for their irreligious rites which pleased their own fancies; they chose, (1.) High places, *upon the tops of the mountains*, and *upon the hills*, foolishly imagining that the height of the ground gave them some advantage, in their approach towards heaven. (2.) Shady places, *under oaks, and poplars, and elms*, because the shadow thereof is pleasant to them, especially in those hot countries, and therefore they thought it was pleasing to their gods; or, they fancied that a thick shade befriends contemplation, possesses the mind with something of an awe, and therefore is proper for devotion.

2. Corporal whoredom is another crime here charged upon them. *They have committed whoredom continually*, *ver. 18.* They drove a trade of uncleanness, it was not a single act now and then, but their constant practice; as it is of many, that have *eyes full of adultery*, and *which cannot cease from that sin*, 2 Pet. ii. 14. Now the abominable filthiness and lewdness that was found in Israel, is here spoken of, (1.) As a concomitant of their idolatry, so their false gods drew them to it; for the devil whom they worshipped, though a *spirit* is an unclean spirit. They that worshipped idols, were *separated with whores*, and they *sacrificed with harlots*; for because they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, but dishonoured him, therefore God *gave them up to vile affections*, by the indulging of which they *dishonoured themselves*, Rom. i. 24, 28. (2.) As a punishment of it. The men that worshipped idols, were *separated with whores* that attended the idolatrous rites, as in the worship of *Baal peor*, Numb. xxv. 1, 2. And to punish them for that, God gave up their wives and daughters to the like vile affections, they *committed whoredom and adultery*, *ver. 13.* which could not but be a great grief and reproach to their husbands and parents, for those that are not chaste themselves, desire to have their wives and daughters so; but thus they might read their sin in their punishment, as David's adultery was punished in the debauching of his concubine by his own son, 2 Sam. xii. 11. Note, When the same sin in others, is made mens grief and affliction, which they have themselves been guilty of, they must own the Lord is righteous.

3. The perverting of justice; *ver. 18.* *Their rulers* (be it spoken to their shame) do love *Give ye*, i. e. they love bribes, and have it continually in their mouths, *Give, give*; they are given to *filthy lucre*; every one that has any business with them, must expect to be asked, *What will you give?* Though as rulers, they are bound by office to do justice, yet none can have justice done them, without a fee, and then you may be sure for a fee, they

they will do injustice. Note, The love of money is the ruin of equity, and the root of all iniquity. But of all men, it is a shame for rulers, who should be men *fearing God*, and *hating covetousness*, to love *Give ye*. Perhaps this is intended in that part of the charge here, *Their drink is sour*, it is dead, it is gone; justice duly administered, is refreshing like *drink* to the thirsty, but when it is perverted, and rulers take *rewards*, either to acquit the guilty, or to condemn the innocent, the *drink is sour*; they turn judgment into wormwood, Amos v. 7. Or it may refer in general to the depraved morals of the whole nation; they had lost all their life and spirit, and were as offensive to God, as dead or sour drink is to us. See Deut. xxxii. 32, 33.

2. The tokens of God's wrath against them for their sins.

1. Their wives and daughters should not be punished for the injury and disgrace they did to their families, ver. 14. *I will not punish your daughters*, and not being punished for it, they would go on in it. Note, The impunity of one sinner is sometimes made the punishment of another. Or, *I will not punish them* so as I will punish you, for you must own as Judah did, concerning her daughter-in-law, that *they are more righteous than you*, Gen. xxxviii. 26.

2. They themselves should prosper for a while, but their prosperity should help to destroy them. It comes in as a token of God's wrath, ver. 16. *the Lord will feed them as a lamb in a large place*; they shall have a fat pasture, and a large one, in which they shall be fed to the full, and fed with the best, but it shall be only to prepare them for the slaughter, as a lamb is that is so fed. If they *wax fat and kick*, they do but wax fat for the butcher. But others make them feed as *a lamb on the common*, a large place indeed, but where it is short grass, and lies exposed; the shepherd of Israel will turn them both out of his pastures, and out of his protection.

3. No means should be used to bring them to repentance; ver. 17. *Ephraim is joined to idols*, is in love with them, and addicted to them, and therefore, *let him alone*, as ver. 4. *Let no man reprove him*. Let him be given up to his own hearts lusts, and walk in his own counsels; we would have healed him, and he would not be healed, therefore forsake him. See what their end will be, Deut. xxxii. 20. Note, It is a sad and sore judgment for any man to be *let alone* in sin; for God to say concerning a sinner, he is joined to his idols, the world and the flesh, he is incurably proud, covetous, or profane, an incurable drunkard, or adulterer, *let him alone*; conscience, let him alone; minister, let him alone; providences, let him alone. Let nothing awaken him till the flames of hell do it. The father corrects not the rebellious son any more when he determines to disinherit him. Those that are not disturbed in their sin, will be destroyed for their sin.

4. They should be hurried away with a swift and shameful destruction, ver. 19. *The wind has bound her up in her wings* to carry her away into captivity, suddenly, violently, and irresistibly; he shall take them away with a whirlwind, Psal. lviii. 9. And then, *they shall be ashamed because of their sacrifices*, ashamed of their sin in offering sacrifice to idols; ashamed of their folly in putting themselves to such an expence upon gods that have no power to help them, and thereby to make that God their enemy that has an almighty power to destroy them. Note, There are sacrifices that men will one day be ashamed of. Those that have sacrificed their time, strength, honour and all their comforts to the world and the flesh, will shortly be ashamed of it. Yea, and those that bring to God blind and lame, and heartless, sacrifices will be ashamed of them too.

3. The warning given to Judah, not to sin after the similitude of Israel's transgression. It is said in the close of ver. 14. *They that do not understand, shall fall*; they must needs fall that do not understand how to avoid, or get over the stumbling-blocks they meet with; and therefore, *let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall*, particularly the two tribes; ver. 15. *Tho' then Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend*. Tho' Israel be given to idolatry, yet let not Judah take the infection. Now, (1.) This was a very needful caution. The men of Israel were brethren, and near neighbours to the men of Judah, Israel was more numerous, and at this time in a prosperous condition, and therefore there was danger, lest the men of Judah should learn their way, and get a snare to their souls. Note, The nearer we are to the infection of sin, the more need we have to stand upon our guard. (2.) It was a very rational caution; *let Israel play the harlot*, yet let not Judah do so, for Judah has greater means of knowledge than Israel, has the temple and priesthood, and a king of the house of David. From Judah, Shiloh, is to come, and for Judah God has reserved great blessings in store, therefore *let not Judah offend*, for more is expected from them than from Israel, and they will have more to answer for, if they do offend; and from them God will take it more unkindly. If *Israel play the harlot*, let not Judah do so too, for then God will have no professing people in the world: God bespeaks Judah here, as Christ doth the twelve, when many turned their backs upon them, *will you also go away?* John vi. 67. Note, Those that have hitherto kept their integrity, should for that reason still hold it fast, even in times of general apostasy.

No. lxxiii.

Now to preserve Judah from offending as Israel had done, two rules are here given. (1.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must keep at a distance from the places of idolatry. *Come not ye unto Gilgal*, where all their wickedness was, chap. ix. 15.—xii. 11. there they multiplied transgression, Amos iv. 4. and perhaps they contracted a veneration for that place, because there it was said to Joshua, the place where thou standest is holy ground, Josh. v. 15. therefore they are forbidden to enter into Gilgal, Amos v. 5. And for the same reason they must not go up to Bethel, here called the house of vanity, for so Bethaven signifies, not the house of God, as Bethel signifies. Note, Those that would be kept from sin, and not fall into the devil's hands, must studiously avoid the occasions of sin, and not come upon the devil's ground. (2.) That they might not be guilty of idolatry, they must take heed of profaneness, and not swear, *the Lord liveth*. They are commanded to swear, *The Lord liveth in truth and righteousness*, Jer. iv. 2. and therefore that which is here forbidden, is *swearing* so in untruth and unrighteousness; swearing rashly and lightly, or falsely, and with deceit; or swearing by the Lord and the idol, Zeph. i. 5. Note, Those that would be steady in their adherence to God, must possess themselves with an awe and reverence of God, and always speak of him with solemnity and seriousness; for those that can make a jest of the true God, will make a god of any thing.

CHAP. V.

The scope of this chapter is the same with the foregoing chapter, to discover the sin both of Israel and Judah, and to denounce the judgments of God against them. (1.) They are called to hearken to the charge, ver. 1, 8. (2.) They are accused of many sins, which are here aggravated. (1.) Persecution, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Spiritual whoredom, ver. 3, 4. (3.) Pride, ver. 5. (4.) Apostasy from God, ver. 7. (5.) The tyranny of the princes, and the tameness of the people in submitting to it, ver. 10, 11. (3.) They are threatened with God's displeasure for their sins; he knows all their wickedness, ver. 3. and makes known his wrath against them for it, ver. 9. (1.) They shall fall in their iniquity, ver. 5. (2.) God will forsake them, ver. 6. (3.) Their portions shall be devoured, ver. 7. (4.) God will rebuke them and pour out his wrath upon them, ver. 9, 10. (5.) They shall be oppressed, ver. 11. (6.) God will be as a moth to them in secret judgments, ver. 12. and as a lion in publick judgments, ver. 14. (4.) They are blamed for the wrong course they took under their afflictions, ver. 13. (5.) It is intimated that they shall at length take a right course, ver. 15. The more generally these things are expressed, of so much the more general use they are, for our learning, and particularly for our admonition.

1. **H**EAR ye this, O priests, and hearken, ye house of Israel, and give ye ear, O house of the king; for judgment is toward you, because you have been a snare on Mizpah, and a net spread upon Tabor. 2. And the revolvers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all. 3. I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from me: for now, O Ephraim, thou committest whoredom, and Israel is defiled. 4. They will not frame their doings to turn unto their God: for the spirit of whoredoms is in the midst of them, and they have not known the LORD. 5. And the pride of Israel doth testify to his face: therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity: Judah also shall fall with them. 6. They shall go with their flocks, and with their herds to seek the LORD: but they shall not find him, he hath withdrawn himself from them. 7. They have dealt treacherously against the LORD: for they have begotten strange children: now shall a moth devour them with their portions.

Here, (1.) All orders and degrees of men are cited to appear and answer to such things as shall be laid to their charge, ver. 1. *Hear ye this, O priests*, whether in holy orders as those in Judah, and perhaps many in Israel too, for in the ten tribes there were divers cities of priests and Levites, who, it is probable, staid in their own lot after the revolt of the ten tribes, and did so much of their office as might be done at a distance from the temple; or *pretending holy orders* as the priests of the calves, who, some think, are included here. *Hearken, ye house of Israel*, the common people, and *give ear, O house of the king*; let them all take notice, for they have all contributed to the national guilt, and they shall all share in the national judgments. Note, If neither

the sanctity of the priesthood, nor the dignity of the royal family will prevail to keep out sin, it cannot be expected they should avail to keep out wrath. If the *priests*, and the *house of the king*, tho' they bear such noble characters, sin like others, their noble characters will not excuse them, but they must smart like others. Nor shall it be any plea for the *house of Israel* that they were misled by their priests and princes, but they shall receive their doom with them, and neither their meanness nor their multitude shall be their exemption.

(2.) Witness is produced against them; one, instead of a thousand, it is God's omniscience; *ver. 3. I know Ephraim and Israel is not hid from me.* They have *not known the Lord*, *ver. 4.* But the Lord has known them; knows their true character, however disguised; knows their secret wickedness, however concealed. Note, Mens rejecting the knowledge of God, will not secure them from his knowledge of them: and when he contends with them, he will prove their sins upon them by his own knowledge, so that it will be in vain to plead, *not guilty.*

(3.) Very ill things are laid to their charge. 1. They had been both very *ingenious* and very *industrious* to draw people either into *sin*, or into *trouble*; ye have been a *snare on Mizpah*, and a *net spread upon Tabor*, *ver. 1. i. e.* Such snares and nets as the huntsmen use to lay upon these mountains in pursuit of their game. When the worship of the calves was set up in Israel, the patrons of that idolatry and sticklers for it, contrived by all possible arts and wiles to draw men into it, and reconcile those to it, that at first had a dread of it. Note, Those that allure and entice men to sin, however they may pretend friendship and good-will, are to be looked upon as *snares and nets* to them, and *their hands as bands*, *Eccl. vii. 26.* But those whom they could not seduce into sin, they were as a *net* and a *snare* to bring them into trouble. Some think it was their practice to set spies in the road, and particularly upon the mountains of Mizpah and Tabor, at the times of the solemn feasts at Jerusalem, to watch if any of their people who were piously affected went thither, and to inform against them, that they might be prosecuted for it; thus doing the devil's work who *disquiets* those whom he cannot *debauch.*

2. They had been both very crafty and very cruel, in carrying on their designs, *ver. 2. The revolvers are profound to make slaughter.* Note, Those that have themselves apostatized from the truths of God, are often the most subtil and barbarous persecutors of those who still adhere to them. Nothing will serve them, but to *make slaughter*, it is the blood of the saints that they thirst after, and with the serpents sting they have his head, they are *profound* to do it. O the depth of the *depths of Satan*, of the wickedness of his agents, of those that have *deeply revolted*, *Isa. xxxi. 6.* Now that which aggravated this, was the many reproofs and warnings that had been given them, *tho' I have been a rebuker of them all.* The prophet had been so, a reprove by office, he had many a time told them of the evil of their ways and doings, had dealt plainly *with them all*, and had not spared either the priests or the house of the king. God himself had been a *rebuker of them all* by their own consciences, and by his providences. Note, Sins against reproof are doubly sinful, *Prov. xxix. 1.*

3. They had committed *whoredom*, had defiled their own bodies with fleshly lusts, had defiled their own souls with the worship of idols, *ver. 3.* This God was a witness to, tho' *secretly* committed, and *artfully* palliated. Nay, the piercing eye of God, saw the *spirit of whoredom* that was in the midst of them; their secret inclination and disposition of those sins, the love they had to their sins, and the dominion their sins had over them, how much they were under the power of a *spirit of whoredom*, that *root of bitterness* which bore all this gall and wormwood; that corrupt and poisoned fountain.

4. They have no disposition at all to come into acquaintance and communion with God. The *spirit of whoredoms* having caused them to err from him, keeps them wandering endlessly, *ver. 4.* (1.) They have *not known the Lord*, nor desired to know him, but have rather *declined*, nay *dreaded* the knowledge of him, for that would disturb them in their sinful ways. (2.) Therefore they will *not frame their doings, to turn to their God*, by which it appeared, they did not *know him* aright. It speaks their obstinate persisting in their apostasy from God: they would not *turn to God*, tho' he is *their God*, theirs in covenant, by whose name they have been called, and whom they are obliged to *serve.* They would not *return* to the worship of him, from which they had turned aside. Nay, they would *not frame their doings to turn to God.* They would not *consider their ways*, nor dispose themselves into a serious temper, nor apply their minds to think of those things that would bring them to God. It is true, we cannot by our own power, without the special grace of God, turn to him, but we may by the due improvement of our own faculties, and the common aids of his Spirit, *frame our doings* to turn to him. And those that will not do that, that *prepare not their hearts to seek the Lord*, 2 Chron. xii. 14. it is long of themselves that they are not turned, they die because they will die; and to those that will do this further grace shall not be wanting.

5. They were guilty of notorious arrogance, and insolence in sin. *Ver. 5. The pride of Israel doth testify to his face*, doth witness against him, that he is a rebel to God and his government; the *spirit of whoredoms* which was in the midst of them, shewed itself in the gaiety and gawdiness of their worship, as a harlot is known by her attire, *Prov. vii. 10.* The wantonness of her dress testifies *to her face*, that she is not a modest woman; or, their pride in confronting the prophets God sent them, and the message they brought; *Jer. xliii. 2.* Or, a haughty scornful carriage towards their brethren, and those that were under them, this *witnessed against* them, that they were not God's people, and justified God in all the humbling judgments he brought upon them. His pride testifies in *his face*, so some read it, agreeing with *Isa. iii. 9. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them.* They have that *proud look* which the Lord hates.

6. They departed from God to idols, and bred up their children in idolatry; *ver. 7. They have dealt treacherously against the Lord*, as a wife that in contempt of the marriage-covenant forsakes her husband, and lives in adultery with another. Thus they who are guilty of spiritual idolatry whose God is their money, whose god is their belly, *deal treacherously against the Lord*, they violate their engagements to him, and frustrate his expectations from them. Note, Wilful sinners are treacherous dealers. *They have begotten strange children, i. e.* Their children which they have begotten are estranged from God, and trained up in a false way of worship, they are a spurious brood, as *children of fornication*, John viii. 41. whom God will disown. Note, Those *deal treacherously* with God indeed, who not only turn from following him themselves, but train up *their children* in wicked ways.

4. Very sad things are made to be their doom; in general, *ver. 1. Judgment is towards you*, God is coming forth to contend with you, and to testify his displeasure against you for your sins. It is time to hearken when judgment is towards us. In particular,

1. They shall fall in their iniquity. This follows upon their *pride testifying to their face*, *ver. 5. therefore shall Israel and Ephraim fall in their iniquity.* Note, Pride will have a fall; it is the certain preface and forerunner of it; they that exalt themselves shall be abased. The face in which *pride testifies*, shall be filled with confusion. They shall not *noly fall*, but *fall in their iniquity*, the saddest fall of all other. Their pride kept them from repenting of their iniquity, and therefore they shall fall in it. Note, Those that are not humbled for their sins are likely to perish for ever in their sins. It is added, *Judah also shall fall with them*, in her iniquity; as the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria for their idolatry, so the two tribes in process of time were carried into Babylon, for following their ill example; but the former fell and were utterly cast down, the latter fell and were raised up again. Judah had the temple and priesthood, and yet that shall not secure them, but if they sin with Israel and Ephraim, with them they shall fall.

2. They shall fall short of God's favour, when they profess to seek it, *ver. 6. They shall go with their flocks and with their herds to seek the Lord*, but in vain; *they shall not find him.* This seems to be spoken principally of Judah, when they fell into their iniquity, and when they fell in their iniquity. (1.) When they fell into their iniquity, they *sought the Lord*, but they did not *seek him only*, and therefore he was not *found of them.* When they worshipped strange gods, yet they kept up the shew and shadow of the worship of the true God; they went as usual, at the solemn feasts *with their flocks and herds to seek the Lord*, but their hearts were not *upright with him*, because they were not *entire for him*, and therefore he would not accept them; for then only shall we find him, when we *seek him with our whole heart*; not *divided* between God and Baal, *Ezek. xiv. 3.* (2.) When they fell in their iniquity, or found themselves falling by it, they *sought the Lord*, but they did not seek him *early*, and therefore he will not be found of them. They shall see ruin coming upon them, and shall then in their distress flee to God, and think to make him their friend with burnt-offerings and sacrifices, but it will be too late then to turn away his wrath, when *the decree is gone forth.* Even Josiah's reformation did not prevail to *turn away the wrath of God*, 2 Kings xxiii. 25, 26. Those that go *with their flocks and their herds* only to seek the Lord, and not with their hearts and souls cannot expect to find him, for his favour is not to be purchased with *thousands of rams.* Nor shall those speed who do not seek the Lord *while he may be found*, for there is a time when he will not be found. They shall not find him for he hath *withdrawn himself*, he will not be enquired of by them; but will turn a deaf ear to their prayers, and have no regard to their sacrifices. See how much it is our concern to seek God early, now while the *accepted time* is, and the day of salvation.

3. They and their portions shall all be swallowed up. They have *dealt treacherously against the Lord*, and have thought to strengthen themselves in it by their alliances with *strange children*, but now *shall a month devour them with their portions, i. e.* their estates and inheritances, all those things which they have taken, and taken up with, as their *portion.* Or, their *portions, i. e.* their idols whom they chose for their portion instead of God. Note, They that make an idol of the world by taking it for

for their portion with themselves perish with it. A month shall devour them, or eat them up, i. e. a certain time prefixed, and a short time. When God's judgments begin with them they shall soon make an end, one month will do their business. How much may a body be weakened by one month's sickness, or a kingdom wasted by one month's war, *three shepherds* (saith God) *I cut off in one month*, Zech. xi. 8. Note, The judgments of God sometimes make quick work with a sinful people. A month devours more and more portions than many years can repair.

8. Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and the trumpet in Ramah: cry aloud at Beth-aven: after thee, O Benjamin. 9. Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke: among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be. 10. The princes of Judah were like them that remove the bound: therefore I will pour out my wrath upon them like water. 11. Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment: because he willingly walked after the commandment. 12. Therefore will I be unto Ephraim as a moth: and to the house of Judah as rottenness. 13. When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. 14. For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him. 15. ¶ I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.

Here is, 1. A loud alarm sounded, giving notice of judgments coming, ver. 8. *Blow ye the cornet in Gibeah, and in Ramah*, two cities near together in the confines of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, Gibeah a frontier town of the kingdom of Judah, Ramah of Israel; so that the warning is hereby sent into both kingdoms; *Cry aloud at Beth-aven*, or Bethel, which place seems to be already seized upon by the enemy, and therefore the trumpet is not sounded there, but you hear the outcries of them that shout for mastery, mixed with theirs that are overcome. Let them cry aloud: After thee, O Benjamin, comes the enemy. The tribe of Ephraim is already vanquished, and the enemy will be upon thy back, O Benjamin, in a little time, thy turn comes next. The cup of trembling shall go round. The prophet had described God's controversy with them as a trial at law, chap. iv. 1. Here he describes it as a trial by battle, and here also when he judgeth he will overcome; let all therefore prepare to meet their God. He had before spoken of the judgments as certain, here he speaks of them as near; and when they are apprehended as just at the door, they are very startling and awakening. The blowing of this cornet is explained, ver. 9. *among the tribes of Israel have I made known that which shall surely be*; that which is true or certain, so the word is. Note, The destruction of impenitent sinners is a thing which shall surely be; it is not meer talk to frighten them, but it is an irrevocable sentence. And it is a mercy to us that it is made known to us, that we have timely warning given us of it, that we may flee from the wrath to come. It is the privilege of the tribes of Israel, that as they are told their duty, so they are told their danger by the oracles of God committed to them.

2. The ground of God's controversy with them. 1. He has a quarrel with the princes of Judah, because they were daring leaders in sin, ver. 10. They are like them that remove the bound, or, the ancient land-marks; God hath given them his law to be a fence about his own property; but they have sacrilegiously broken through it, and set it aside; they have encroached even upon God's rights, have trampled upon the distinctions between good and evil, and the most sacred obligations of reason and equity, thinking because they were princes their will was a law, and they might do any thing, *quicquid libet, licet*. Or, it may be understood of their invading the liberty and property of the subject, for the advancing of the prerogative; which was like removing the ancient land-marks. Some have observed, that the princes of Judah were more absolute, and assumed a more arbitrary power than the princes of Israel did; now for this God has a controversy with them; *I will pour out my wrath upon them like water*, in great abundance, like the waters of the flood, which were poured upon the giants of the old world, for the violence which the earth was filled with through them, Gen. vi. 13. Note, There are bounds which even princes themselves must not remove, bounds both of religion and justice, which they are limited by; and which if they break through, they must know that there is a God above them, that will call them to account for it.

2. He has a quarrel with the people of Ephraim, because they were sneaking followers in sin; ver. 11. *He willingly walked after the commandment*, i. e. The commandment of Jeroboam and the

ucceeding kings of Israel, who obliged all their subjects by a law to worship the calves at Dan and Bethel, and never to go up to Jerusalem to worship; this was the commandment, it was the law of the land, and backed with reasons of state, and the people not only walked after it in a blind implicit obedience to authority, but they willingly walked after it, from a secret antipathy they had to the worship of God, and a strong bias to the worship of idols. Note, An easy compliance with the commandments of men that thwart the commandments of God, ripens a people for ruin as much as any thing else. And the punishment of this *sequeacious* disobedience (if I may so call it) answers the sin; for it is for this that Ephraim is oppressed and broken in judgment; has all his civil rights and liberties broken in upon and trodden down; And (1.) It is just with God it should be so; that those who betray God's property should lose their own; that those who subject their consciences to an infallible judge, and an arbitrary power should have enough of both. (2.) There is a natural tendency in the thing itself towards it; they that willingly walk after the commandments, even when it walks contrary to the command of God, will find the commandment an encroaching thing, and that the more power is given it, the more it will claim. Note, Nothing gives greater advantage to a mastiff-like tyranny that is fierce and furious than a spaniel-like submission that is fawning and flattering. Thus is Ephraim oppressed and broken in judgment, i. e. he is wronged under a face and colour of right. Note, It is a sad and fore judgment upon any people to be oppressed under pretence of having justice done them. This explains the threatening, ver. 9. *Ephraim shall be desolate in the day of rebuke*. Note, Daring sinners must expect that a day of rebuke will come, and such a day of rebuke as will make them desolate; will deprive them of the comfort of all they have, and all they hope for.

3. The different methods that God would take both with Judah and Ephraim, sometimes one method, and sometimes the other, and sometimes both together. Or rather by which, first the one and then the other, he would advance towards their complete ruin.

1. He would begin with lesser judgments, which should sometimes work silently and insensibly, ver. 12. *I will be*, i. e. my providences shall be unto Ephraim as a moth, nay (as it might better be supplied) they are unto Ephraim as a moth, for it is such a sickness as Ephraim now sees, ver. 13. Note, The judgments of God are sometimes to a sinful people, as a moth, and as rottenness, or as a worm. The former signifies the little animals that breed in clothes, the latter those that breed in wood; as these consume the clothes and the wood, so shall the judgments of God consume them. (1.) Silently, so as not to make any noise in the world, nay, so as they themselves shall not be sensible of it; they shall think themselves safe and thriving, but when they come to look more narrowly into their state, shall find themselves wasting and decaying. (2.) Slowly, and with long delays, and intervals, that he may give them space to repent. Many a nation as well as many a person in the prime of its time dies of a consumption. (3.) Gradually, God comes upon sinners with lesser judgments so to prevent greater, if they will be wise and take warning, comes upon them step by step to shew he is not willing they should perish. (4.) The moth breeds in the clothes, and the worm or rottenness in the wood; thus sinners are consumed by a fire of their own kindling.

2. When it appeared those had not done their work, he would come upon them with greater, ver. 14. *I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and to the house of Judah as a young lion*, tho' Judah is himself in Jacob's blessing a lion's whelp. Left any should think his power weakened, because he was said to be as a moth to them, he saith he will now be as a lion to them, not only to frighten them with his roaring, but to pull them to pieces. Note, If lesser judgments prevail not to do their work, it may be expected that God will send greater. Christ is sometimes a lion of the tribe of Judah, here he is a lion against that tribe; see what God will do to a people that are secure in sin, even I will tear. He seems to glory in it as his prerogative to be able to destroy, as the alone lawgiver, Jam. iv. 12. *I, even I*, I will take the work into my own hands; I say it that will do it. There is a more immediate work of God in some judgments than in others. *I will bear and go away*. He will go away (1.) As not fearing them; he will go away in state, and with a majestic face, as the lion from his prey. (2.) As not helping them. If God tear by afflicting providences, and yet by his graces and comforts stays with us, it is well enough; but our condition is sad indeed if he tear and go away; if when he deprives us of our creature comforts, he doth himself depart from us. When he goes away he will take away, all that is valuable and dear, for when God goes, all good goes along with him. He will take away and none shall rescue him; as the prey cannot be rescued from the lion, Mic. v. 8. Note, None can be delivered out of the hands of God's justice, but those that are delivered into the hands of his grace. It is in vain for a man to strive with his Maker.

4. The different effects of those different methods.

1. When God contended with them by lesser judgments, they neglected him and sought to creatures for relief, but sought in vain, ver. 13. When God was to them as a moth, and as rottenness,

tenness, they perceived *their sickness and their wound*, after a while they found themselves going down the wind, and that they were behind hand in their affairs, their state was sensibly decaying, and then they sent to the Assyrian, to come in to their assistance, made their court to king Jareb, which, some think, was one of the names of Pul or Tiglathpileser kings of Assyria, to whom both Israel and Judah applied themselves for relief in their distress, hoping by an alliance with them to repair and re-establish their declining interests. Note, Carnal hearts in time of trouble see their sickness, and see their wound, but do not see the sin that is the cause of it, nor will be brought to acknowledge that, no, nor to acknowledge the hand of God, his *mighty hand*, much less his *righteous hand* in their trouble; and therefore instead of going the next way to the Creator that could relieve them, they take a great deal of pains to go about to creatures that can do them no service. Those who repent not that they have offended God by their sins, are loth to be beholden to him in their afflictions, but would rather seek relief any where than with him. And what comes of it? *Yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound.* Note, Those who neglect God and seek to creatures for help will certainly be disappointed; that depend upon them for *support* will find them not *foundations*, but *broken reeds*; that depend upon them for *supply*, will find them not *fountains* but *broken cisterns*; that depend upon them for *comfort* and a *cure*, will find them *miserable comforters* and *physicians of no value*. The kings of Assyria whom Judah and Israel sought unto, *distressed them and helped them not*, 2 Chron. xxviii. 16, 21. Some make king Jareb to signify the *great, potent, or magnificent king*, for they built much upon his power; others *the king that will plead, or should plead*, for they built much upon his wisdom and eloquence, and in the interesting himself in their affairs; they had sent him a *present*, chap. x. 6. a good fee, and having so retained him of counsel for them, they doubted not of his fidelity to them, but he deceived them, as an arm of flesh doth those that trust in it, Jer. xvii. 5, 6.

2. When to convince them of their folly God brought greater judgments upon them then they would at length be forced to apply themselves to him; ver. 15. When he has *torn* as a lion, (1.) He will leave them; *I will go and return to my place*, i. e. to heaven, or to the mercy-seat, the throne of grace, which is his glory: When God punisheth sinners he *comes out of his place*, Isa. xxvi. 21. but when he designs them favour he *returns to his place*, where he waits to be *gracious* upon their submission. Or, he will *return to his place* when he has corrected them, as not regarding them, hiding his face from them, and not taking notice of their troubles or prayers; and this for their further humiliation, till they are qualified in some measure for the returns of his favour. (2.) He will at length work upon them and bring them home to himself by their afflictions; which is the thing he waits for; and then he will no longer withdraw from them. Two things are here mentioned as instances of their return; (1.) Their penitent *confession* of sin, *till they acknowledge their offence*; marg. *Till they be guilty*, i. e. till they be sensible of their guilt, and are brought to own it, and humble themselves before God for it. Note, When men begin to complain more of their sins than of their afflictions, then there begins to be some hope of them; and this is that which God requires of us when we are under his correcting hand that we own ourselves in a fault, and justly corrected. (2.) Their humble *petition* for the favour of God; till they *seek my face*, which it may be expected they will do when they are brought to the last extremity, and they have tried other helpers in vain. *In their affliction they will seek me early*, i. e. diligently and earnestly, and with great importunity; and if they seek him thus, and be sincere in it, tho' it might be called seeking him *late*, because it was long ere they were brought to it, yet it is not *too late*, nay, he is pleased to call it seeking him *early*, so willing is he to make the best of true penitents in their return to him. Note, When we are under the convictions of sin, and the corrections of the rod, our business is to seek God's face; i. e. we must desire the knowledge of him, and an acquaintance with him, that he may manifest himself to us, and for us, in token of his being at peace with us. And it may reasonably be expected that affliction will bring those to God that had long gone astray from him, and kept at a distance. Therefore God for a time turns away from us, that he may turn us to himself, and then return to us. *Is any among you afflicted? let him pray.*

C H A P. VI.

The closing words of the foregoing chapter, gave us some hopes that God and his Israel, notwithstanding their sins and his wrath, might yet be happily brought together again; that they would seek him and he would be found of them; now this chapter carries that matter further, and some join the beginning of this chapter with

the end of that, they will seek me early, saying, Come and let us return; but God doth again complain of the wickedness of this people, for tho' some did repent and reform, the greater part continued obstinate. Observe (1.) Their resolution to return to God, and the comforts wherewith they encourage themselves in their return, ver. 1—3. (2.) The instability of many of them in their professions and promises of repentance, and the severe course which God therefore took with them, ver. 4, 5. (3.) The covenant God made with them, and his expectations from them, ver. 6. and their violation of that covenant, and frustrating those expectations, ver. 7—11.

1. **C**OME, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. 2. After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. 3. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain; as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

These may be taken either as the words of the prophet to the people calling them to repentance, or as the words of the people to one another, exciting and encouraging one another to seek the Lord, and to humble themselves before him, in hopes of finding mercy with him. God had said, *in their affliction they would seek him*; now the prophet and the good people his friends would strike while the iron was hot; and set in with the convictions their neighbours seemed to be under. Note, Those who are disposed to turn to God themselves, should do all they can to excite and engage and encourage others to return to him. Observe,

1. What it is they engage to do. *Come, and let us return to the Lord*, ver. 1. Let us go no more to the Assyrian, nor send to king Jareb, we have enough of that, but let us *return to the Lord*: Return to the worship of him from our idolatries, and to our hope in him from all our confidences in the creature. Note, It is the great concern of those who have revolted from God to return to him. And those who have gone from him by consent, and in a body drawing one another to sin, should by consent and in a body return to him, which will be for his glory, and their mutual edification.

2. What inducements and encouragements to do this they fasten upon, to stir up one another with.

1. The experience they had had of his displeasure. Let us return to him, for *he has torn, he hath smitten*, we have been torn, and it was he that tore us; we have been smitten, and it was he that smote us; therefore let us return to him, because it is for our revolts from him, that he has torn and smitten us in anger, and we cannot expect he should be reconciled to us, till we do return to him; and for this end he has afflicted us thus, that we might be wrought upon to return to him; and his hand will be stretched out still against us, if the people turn not to him that smiteth them, Isa. ix. 12, 13. Note, The consideration of the judgments of God upon us and our land, especially when they are *tearing judgments*, should awaken us to return to God by repentance, and prayer, and reformation.

2. The expectation they had of his favour. He that has torn will heal us, that hath smitten will bind us up; as the skillful surgeon with a tender hand binds up the broken bone, or bleeding wound. Note, The same providence of God that afflicts his people relieves them, and the same Spirit of God that convinceth the saints comforts them; that which is first a *Spirit of bondage* is afterward a *Spirit of adoption*. This is an acknowledgment of the power of God, he can heal tho' we be never so ill torn; and of his mercy he will do it; nay, therefore he has torn that he may heal. Some think this points particularly to the return of the Jews out of Babylon, when they sought the Lord and joined themselves to him in the prospect of his gracious return to them in a way of mercy. Note, It will be of great use to us both for our support under our afflictions, and for our encouragement in our repentance to keep up good thoughts of God, and of his purposes and designs concerning us.

Now this favour of God which they are here in expectation of is described in several instances.

1. They promise themselves that their deliverance out of their troubles should be to them as *life from the dead*, ver. 2. *After two days he will revive us*, i. e. in a short time, in a day or two, and the third day, when it is expected that the dead body should putrefy and corrupt, and be buried out of our sight, then will he raise us up, and we shall live in his sight, i. e. we shall see his face with comfort, and it shall be reviving to us. Tho' he forsake for a small moment, he will gather with everlasting kindness. Note, The people of God may not only be torn and smitten but left for dead, and may lie so a great while; but they shall not always lie so; nor shall they long lie so; God will in a little time revive them; and the assurance given them of this should engage them to return and adhere to him. But this seems to have a further

further reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and the time limited is expressed by the *two days* and the *third day*, that it may be a type and figure of Christ's rising the *third day*, which he is said to do according to the scriptures; according to *this scripture*; for all the prophets witnessed of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Let us see and admire the wisdom and goodness of God, in ordering the prophets words so as that when he foretold the deliverance of the church out of her troubles, he should at the same time point out our salvation by Christ, which other salvations were both figures of, and fruits of; and tho' they might not be aware of this mystery in the words, yet now they are fulfilled in the letter of them, in the resurrection of Christ, it is a confirmation to our faith, that *this is he that should come*, and we are to look for no other. And it is agreeable enough that a prophecy of Christ's rising should be thus expressed, he will raise us up, and we shall live, for Christ rose as the first-fruits, and we revived with him, we live through him; he rose for our justification, and all believers are said to be risen with Christ. See Isa. xxvi. 19. And it would serve for a comfort to the church then, and an assurance that God would raise them out of their low estate, for in his fulness of time he would raise his Son from the grave, who would be the life and glory of his people Israel. Note, A regard by faith to a rising Christ, is a great support to a suffering Christian, and gives abundant encouragement to a repenting, returning sinner; for he hath said, *Because I live, you shall live also*.

2. That then they shall improve in the knowledge of God, ver. 3. *Then shall we know if we follow, on to know the Lord*. Then when God returns in mercy to his people, and designs favour for them, he will as a pledge and fruit of his favour give them more of the knowledge of himself; the earth shall be full of that knowledge, Isa. xi. 9. *Knowledge shall be increased*, Dan. xii. 4. *all shall know God*, Jer. xxxi. 34. *we shall know; we shall follow to know the Lord*; so the words are. And it may be taken as the fruit of Christ's resurrection and the life we live in God's sight by him, that we shall have not only greater means of knowledge, but grace to improve in knowledge by those means. Note, When God designs mercy for a people, he gives them a heart to know him, Jer. xxiv. 7. They that are risen with Christ, have the spirit of wisdom and revelation given them. And if we understand our living in his sight, as the Chaldee paraphrast doth, of the day of the resurrection of the dead, it fitly follows, *we shall know, we shall follow to know the Lord*, for in that day we shall see him as he is; and our knowledge of him shall be perfected, and yet be eternally increasing. Or taking it as we read it, *if we follow on to know*; we have here (1.) A precious blessing promised; *then shall we know, shall know the Lord*. Then when we return to God; those that come to God shall be brought into an acquaintance with him. When we are designed to live in his sight, then he gives us to know him; for this is life eternal to know God, John xvii. 3. (2.) The way and means of obtaining this blessing. We must follow on to know him. We must value and esteem the knowledge of God, as the best knowledge, we must cry after it, and dig for it, Prov. ii. 3, 4. *must seek and intermeddle with all wisdom*, Prov. xviii. 1. and must proceed in our enquiries after this knowledge, and our endeavours to improve in it. And if we do the prescribed duty, we have reason to expect the promised mercy, that we shall know more and more of God, and be at last perfect in this knowledge.

3. That then they shall abound in divine consolations. His going forth is prepared as the morning, i. e. the returns of his favour, which he had withdrawn from us, when he went and returned to his place. His out-goings again, are prepared and secured to us as firmly as the return of the morning after a dark night, and we expect it, as those do that wait for the morning, after a long night, and are sure it will come at the time appointed and will not fail; and the light of his countenance will be both welcome to us, and growing upon us, unto the perfect day, as the light of the morning is. He shall come to us, and be welcome to us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth, which refresheth it, and makes it fruitful. Now this looks further than their deliverance out of captivity, and, no doubt, was to have its full accomplishment in Christ and the grace of the gospel. The Old Testament saints followed on to know him, earnestly looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and at length the out-goings of divine grace in him, in his going forth to visit this world were, (1.) As the morning to this earth, when it is dark; for he went forth as the sun of righteousness, and in him the day spring from on high visited us. His going forth was prepared as the morning, for he came in the fulness of time, John Baptist was his forerunner, nay, he was himself the bright and morning star. (2.) As the rain to this earth when it is dry; he shall come down as the rain upon the mown grass, Psal. lxxii. 6. And in him showers of blessings descend upon this world, which give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, Isa. lv. 10. And the favour of God in Christ is what is said of the king's favour, like the cloud of the latter rain, Prov. xvi. 15. The grace of God in Christ is both the latter and the former rain, for by it the good work of our fruit-bearing is both begun and carried on.

4. ¶ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. 5. Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets: I have slain them by the words of my mouth, and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings. 7. But they like men have transgressed the covenant: there have they dealt treacherously against me. 8. Gilead is a city of them that work iniquity; and is polluted with blood. 9. And as troops of robbers wait for a man, so the company of priests murder in the way by consent: for they commit lewdness. 10. I have seen an horrible thing in the house of Israel: there is the whoredom of Ephraim, Israel is defiled. 11. Also O Judah, he hath set an harvest for thee, when I returned the captivity of my people.

Two things, two ill things, both Judah and Ephraim are here charged with, and justly accused of.

1. That they were not firm to their own convictions; but were unsteady, unstable as water, ver. 4, 5. O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? This is a strange expression, can infinite wisdom be at a loss what to do? Can it be nonplussed, or put upon taking new measures? By no means; but God speaks after the manner of men, to shew how absurd and unreasonable they were, and how just his proceedings against them were. Let them not complain of him as harsh and severe in tearing them, and smiting them as he has done, for what else should he do? What other course could he take with them? God had tried various methods with them, what could have been done more to his vineyard than he had done? Isa. v. 4. and very loth he was to let things go to extremity; he reasons with himself, as chap. xi. 8, 9. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? God would have done them good but they were not qualified for it; what shall I do unto thee? What else can I do but cast thee off, when I cannot in honour save thee? Note, God never destroys sinners till he sees there is no other way with them.

See here (1.) What their carriage was towards God. Their goodness or kindness was as the morning cloud. Some understand it of their kindness to themselves and their own souls, in their repentance; it is indeed mercy to ourselves to repent of our sins, but they soon retracted that kindness to themselves, undid it again, and wronged their own souls as much as ever; but it is rather taken for their piety and religion, what good appeared in them sometimes, it soon vanished and disappeared again; as the morning cloud and the early dew. Such was the goodness of Israel in Jehu's time, and of Judah in Hezekiah's and Josiah's time; it was soon gone. In time of drought, the morning cloud promiseth rain, and the early dew is some present refreshment to the earth, but the cloud is dispersed (and hypocrites are compared to clouds without water, Jude 12.) the dew doth not soak into the ground, but is drawn back again into the air, and the earth is parched still. What shall he do with them? Shall he accept their goodness? No, for it passeth away; and *factum non dicitur quod non perseverat*. Note, That goodness will never be either pleasing to God or profitable to ourselves, which is as the morning cloud and the early dew. When men promise fair and do not perform, when they begin well in religion, and do not hold on, when they leave their first love, and their first works, or tho' they do not quite cast off religion, yet are unsteady, uneven and inconstant in it, then is their goodness as the morning cloud, and the early dew.

(2.) What course God had taken with them, ver. 5. therefore because they were so rough and ill-shapen, I have hewed them by the prophets, as timber or stone are hewed for use, i. e. I have slain them by the words of my mouth. What the prophets did, was done by the word of God in their mouths, which never returned void. By it they thought themselves slain, were ready to say the prophets killed them, or cut them to the heart, when they dealt faithfully with them. (1.) The prophets hewed them by convictions of sin, endeavouring to cut off their transgressions from them. They were uneven in religion, ver. 4. therefore God hewed them. The hearts of sinners are not only as stone, but as rough stone, which requires a great deal of pains to bring it into shape; or as knotty timber, that is not squared without a deal of difficulty; ministers work is to hew them, and God by the minister hews them, for with the froward, he will shew himself froward. And there are those whom ministers must rebuke sharply; every word should cut, and tho' the chips fly in the face of the workman, tho' the reprov'd fly in the face of the reprover, and reckon him an enemy because he tells the truth, yet he goes on with his work. (2.) They slew them by the denunciations of wrath, foretelling that they should be slain, as Ezekiel is said to destroy the city, when he prophesied of the destruction of it, Ezek. xliii. 3. And God accomplished that which was foretold; I have slain them by my judgments, according to the words of my mouth. Note, The word of God will be either the death of the sin, or the death of the sinner; a favour either

either of death unto life, or of death unto death. Some read it, *I have hewed the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth*, i. e. I have employed them in *laborious* service for the peoples good, which has wasted their strength, they have spent themselves and hewed away all their spirits in their work; and in *hazardous* service, which has cost many of them their lives. Note, Ministers are the tools which God makes use of in working upon people, and tho' with many they labour in vain, yet God will reckon for the wearing out of his tools. (3.) God was hereby justified in the severest proceedings against them afterwards. His prophets had taken a deal of pains with them, had admonished them of their sin, and warned them of their danger, but the means used had not the desired effect, some good impressions perhaps were made for the present, but they wore off, and *passed away*, as the *morning cloud*, and now they cannot charge God with severity, if he bring upon them the miseries threatened. The prophet turns to him and acknowledgeth, *thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth*; evidently just and righteous. Note, Tho' sinners be not reclaimed by the pains that ministers take with them, yet thereby God will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judgeth. See *Mat. xi. 17, 18, 19.*

2. That they were not faithful to God's covenant with them, *ver. 6, 7, &c.* Where observe,

1. What the covenant was that God made with them, and upon what terms they should obtain his favour and be accepted of him, *ver. 6. I desired mercy and not sacrifice*, i. e. rather than sacrifice, and insisted upon the knowledge of God more than upon burnt-offerings. *Mercy* here is the same word which we render *goodness*, *ver. 4. chesed*, piety, sanctity, it is put for all practical religion; it is the same with *charity* in the New Testament, the reigning love of God and our neighbour. And this accompanied with and flowing from the knowledge of God, as he has revealed himself in his word, a firm belief that he is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, a good affection to divine things, guided by a good judgment, which cannot but produce a very good conversation; this is that which God by his covenant requires, and not sacrifice and offering. This is fully explained, *Jer. vii. 22, 23. I spake not to your fathers concerning burnt-offerings*, that was the smallest of the matters I spake to them of, and on which the least stress was laid, but *this I said, Obey my voice*, *Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8.* to love God and our neighbour is better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice, *Mark xii. 33. Psal. li. 16, 17.* Not but that sacrifice and offering were required, and to be paid, and had their use, and when they were accompanied with mercy and the knowledge of God, were acceptable to him, but without them God regarded them not, he despised them, *Isa. i. 10, 11.* Perhaps this is mentioned here, to shew a difference between the God whom they deserted, and the gods whom they went over to. The true God aimed at nothing, but that they should be good men, and live good lives for their own good, and the ceremony of honouring him with sacrifices was one of the smallest matters of his law; whereas the false gods required that only, let their priests and altars be regaled with sacrifices and offerings, and the people might live as they list; what fools were they then that left a God who aimed at giving his worshippers a new nature, for gods who aimed at nothing but making themselves a new name. It is mentioned likewise to shew that God's controversy with them was not for the omission of sacrifices, *I will not reprove thee for them*, *Psal. l. 8.* but because there was no justice, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God among them, *chap. iv. 1.* And to teach us all, that the power of godliness is the main thing God looks at, and requires, and without it the form of godliness is of no avail. Serious piety in the heart and life is the one thing needful, and separate from that the performances of devotion, tho' never so plausible, never so costly, are of no account. Our Saviour quotes this, to shew that moral duties are to be preferred before rituals, whenever they come in competition; and to justify himself in eating with publicans and sinners, because it was in mercy to the souls of men, and in healing on the sabbath-day, because it was in mercy to the bodies of men, to which the ceremony of singularity in eating, and the sabbath-rest, must give way, *Mat. ix. 13.—xii. 7.*

2. How little they had regarded this covenant. Tho' it was so well ordered in all things, tho' they and not God would be the gainers by it; yet see here what came of it.

1. In general, they broke with God and proved unfaithful; there were good things committed to them to keep, the jewels of mercy and piety, and the knowledge of God in the cabinet of sacrifice and burnt-offering, but they betrayed their trust, kept the cabinet, but pawned the jewels for the gratifications of a base lust, and this is that for which God has justly a quarrel with them, *ver. 7. they like men have transgressed the covenant*, that covenant which God made with them, they have broken the conditions of it, and so forfeited the benefit of it. By casting off mercy and the knowledge of God, and other instances of disobedience (1.) They had contracted the guilt of perjury and covenant breaking; they were like men that transgress a covenant by which they had solemnly bound themselves, which is a thing that all the world cries out shame on; men that have done so, deserve not again to be valued or trusted, or dealt with. There, in that thing, they have dealt treacherously against me; they have been perfidious, base, and false children, in whom is no faith, tho' I depended upon their being children that would not lie. (2.) In this they had but acted like them-

selves, like men, who are generally false and fickle, and in whose nature, i. e. their corrupt nature it is to deal treacherously; all men are liars, and they are like the rest of that degenerate race, all gone aside; *Psal. xiv. 2, 3.* They have transgressed the covenant like men, i. e. like the Gentiles, that transgressed the covenant of nature. Like mean men, the word here used is sometimes put for men of low degree, they have dealt deceitfully like base men that have no sense of honour. (3.) Herein they trod in the steps of our first parents; they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant; so it might very well be read; as he transgressed the covenant of innocency, so they transgressed the covenant of grace; so treacherously, so foolishly; there in paradise he violated his engagements to God, and there in Canaan, another paradise, they violated their engagements. And by their treacherous dealing, they, like Adam, have ruined themselves and theirs. Note, Sin is so much the worse, the more there is in it of the similitude of Adam's transgression, *Rom. v. 14.* (4.) Low thoughts of God and of his authority and favour was at the bottom of all this; for so some read it. They have transgressed the covenant, as of a man, as if it had been but the covenant of a man, that stood upon even ground with them; as if the commands of the covenant were but like those of a man like themselves, and the kindness conveyed by it no more valuable than that of a man. There is something sacred and binding in a man's covenant, as the apostle shews, *Gal. iii. 15.* but much more in the covenant of God, which yet they made small account of; and there in that covenant they dealt treacherously; promised fair, but performed nothing. And dealing treacherously with God, is here called dealing treacherously against him, for it is both an affront, and an opposition. Deserters are traitors, and will so be treated; the revolting heart is a rebellious heart.

2. Some particular instances of their treachery are here given, There they dealt treacherously, i. e. in the places hereafter named.

1. Look on the other side Jordan to the country which lay most exposed to the insults of the neighbour nations, and where therefore the people were concerned to keep themselves under the divine protection, yet there you will find the most daring provocations of the Divine Majesty, *ver. 8.* Gilead, which lay in the lot of Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, was a city of the workers of iniquity. Wickedness was the trade that was driven there; the country was called Gilead, but it was all called a city, because they were all as it were incorporated in one society of rebels against God. Or (as most think) Ramoth Gilead is the city here meant, one of the three cities of refuge on t'other side Jordan, and a Levites city; the inhabitants of it, tho' of the sacred tribe, were workers of iniquity, contrived it and practised it. Note, It is bad indeed when a Levites city is a city of those that work iniquity; when those that are to preach good doctrine live ill lives. Particularly it is polluted with blood; as if that were a sin which the wicked Levites were in a special manner guilty of. In popish countries the clergy are observed to be the most bloody persecutors. Or, as it was a city of refuge by abusing the power it had to judge of murders, it became polluted with blood. They would for a bribe protect those that were guilty of wilful murder, whom they ought to have put to death; and would deliver those to the avenger of blood that were guilty but of chance-medley, if they were poor and had nothing to give them, and both these ways they were polluted with blood. Note, Blood defiles the land where it is shed, and no inquisition made, or no vengeance taken for it. And see how the best institutions that are never so well designed to keep the balance even between justice and mercy, are capable of being abused and perverted to the manifest prejudice and violation of both.

2. Look among those whose business it was to minister in holy things, and they were as bad as the worst, and as vile as the vilest; *ver. 9. the company of priests* are so, not here and there one that is the scandal of his order, but the whole order and body of them; the priests go all one way, by consent, with one shoulder, as the word is, one and all; and they make one another worse, more daring and fierce, and impudent in sin; more crafty, and more cruel. A company of priests will say and do that in conspiracy which none of them would dare to say or do singly. The companies of priests were as troops of robbers, as banditti, or gangs of highway-men, that cut mens throats to get their money. (1.) They were cruel, and blood-thirsty, they murder those that they have a pique against, or that stand in their way; nothing less will satisfy them. (2.) They were cunning, they laid wait for men, that they might have a fair opportunity to compass their mischievous, malicious designs; thus the company of priests laid wait for Christ, to take him, saying, *Not on the feast day.* (3.) They were concurring, as one man; they murder in the way, in the highway, where travellers should be safe, there they murder by consent, aiding and abetting one another in it; see how unanimous wicked people are in doing mischief, and should not good people be so then in doing good? They murder in the way to Shechem, so the margin reads it as a proper name, such as were going to Jerusalem (for that way Shechem lay) to worship. Or, in the way to Shechem, some think means in the same manner that their father Levi, with Simeon his brother, murdered the Shechemites, *Gen. xxxiv.* by fraud and deceit, and some understand it of their destroying the souls of men, by drawing them to sin. (4.) They did it with contrivance; they committed lewdness; the word signifies such wickedness as is committed with

deliberation, and of malice prepenſe, as we ſay. The more there is of device and deſign in ſin, the worſe it is.

3. Look into the body of the people, take a view of the whole houſe of Iſrael, and they are all alike, *ver. 10. I have ſeen a horrible thing in the houſe of Iſrael*, and tho' it be never ſo artfully managed, God diſcovers it, and will diſcover it to them; and who can deny that which God himſelf ſaith he hath ſeen? *There is the whoredom of Ephraim*, both corporal and ſpiritual whoredom, there it is too plain to be denied. Note, The ſin of ſinners, eſpecially ſinners of the houſe of Iſrael, has enough in it to make them tremble, for it is a horrible thing, it is amazing, and it is threatening; to make them bluſh, for Iſrael is thereby defiled, and rendred odious in the ſight of God.

4. Look into Judah, and you find them ſharing with Iſrael, *ver. 11. Alſo, O Judah, he hath ſet a harveſt for thee*; thou muſt be reckoned with as well as Ephraim, thou art ripe for deſtruction too, and the time, even the ſet time of thy deſtruction is haſting on, when thou that haſt plowed iniquity and ſown wickedneſs ſhalt reap the ſame. The general judgment is compared to a harveſt, *Mat. xiii. 39.* ſo are particular judgments, *Joel iii. 13. Rev. xiv. 15.* I have appointed a time to call thee to account, even when I returned the captivity of my people, i. e. when thoſe captives of Judah which were taken by the men of Iſrael were reſtored, in obedience to the command of God ſent them by Oded the prophet, *2 Chron. xxviii. 8.—15.* When God ſpared them that time, he ſet them a harveſt, i. e. he deſigned to reckon with them another time for all together. Note, Preservations from preſent judgments, if a good uſe be not made of them, are but reſervations for greater judgments.

CH A P. VII.

In this chapter we have (1.) A general charge drawn up againſt Iſrael for thoſe high crimes and miſdemors by which they had obſtructed the courſe of God's favours to them, *ver. 1. 2.* (2.) A particular accuſation, (1.) Of the court; the king, princes and judges, *ver. 3.—7.* (2.) Of the country. Ephraim is here charged with conforming to the nations, *ver. 8. ſenſeleſneſs and ſtupidity under the judgments of God, ver. 9.—11. ingratitude to God for his mercies, ver. 13. incorrigible neſs under his judgments, ver. 14. contempt of God, ver. 15. and hypocriſy in their pretences to return to him, ver. 16.* They are alſo threatened with a ſevere chaſtiſement, which ſhall humble them, *ver. 12. and if that prevail not, then with an utter deſtruction, ver. 13. particularly their princes, ver. 16.*

2. **W**HEN I would have healed Iſrael, then the iniquity of Ephraim was diſcovered, and the wickedneſs of Samaria: for they commit falſhood: and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers ſpoileth without. 2. And they conſider not in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedneſs: now their own doings have beſet them about, they are before my face. 3. They make the king glad with their wickedneſs, and the princes with their lyes. 4. They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceaſeth from raiſing after he hath kneaded the dough, until it be leavened. 5. In the day of our king, the princes have made him ſick with bottles of wine, he ſtretched out his hand with ſcorners. 6. For they have made ready their heart like an oven, whiles they lay in wait: their baker ſleepeth all the night, in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire. 7. They are all hot as an oven, and have devoured their judges; all their kings are fallen, there is none among them that calleth unto me.

Some take away the laſt words of the foregoing chapter and make them the beginning of this; *when I returned, or would have returned the captivity of my people*, when I was about to come towards them in ways of mercy, even when I would have healed Iſrael, then the iniquity of Ephraim, i. e. the country and common people was diſcovered, and the wickedneſs of Samaria, i. e. the court and the chief city.

Now in theſe verſes we may obſerve,
(1.) A general idea given of the preſent ſtate of Iſrael, *ver. 1. 2.* See how the caſe now ſtood with them.

1. God graciously deſigned to do well for them, *I would have healed Iſrael*; Iſrael was ſick and wounded, their diſeaſe was dangerous and malignant, and likely to be fatal, *Iſa. i. 6.* But God offered to be their phyſician, to undertake the cure, and there was balm in Gilead ſufficient to recover the health of the daughter of my people; their caſe was bad, but it was not deſperate, nay,

it was hopeful when God would have healed Iſrael, i. e. (1.) He would have reformed them, would have parted between them and their ſins, would have purged out the corruptions that were among them by his laws and prophets. (2.) He would have delivered them out of their troubles, and reſtored to them their peace and proſperity. Several healing attempts were made, and their declining ſtate ſeemed ſometimes to be in a hopeful way of recovery, but their own folly put them back again. Note, If ſinful miſerable ſouls be not healed and helped, but periſh in their ſin and miſery, they cannot lay the blame on God, for he both could and would have healed them, he offered to take the ruin under his hand. And there are ſome ſpecial ſeaſons when God manifeſts his readineſs to heal a diſtempered church and nation; now and then a hopeful criſis, which if carefully watched and improved, might even when the caſe is very bad, turn the ſcale for life and health.

2. They ſtood in their own light, and put a bar in their own door; when God would have healed them, when they bid fair for reformation and peace, then their iniquity was diſcovered, and their wickedneſs, and that ſtopt that current of God's favours, and undid all again. (1.) Then when their caſe came to be examined and enquired into in order to their cure, that wickedneſs which had been concealed and palliated was found out; not that it was ever hid from God, but he ſpeaks after the manner of men; as a ſurgeon when he probes a wound in order for the cure of it, finds it touches the vitals and is incurable, goes no further in his endeavour to cure it; ſo when God came down to ſee the caſe of Iſrael (as the expreſſion is, *Gen. xviii. 21.*) with kind intentions towards them, he found their wickedneſs ſo very flagrant, and then ſo hardened in it, ſo impudent and impenitent, that he could not in honour ſhew them the favour he deſigned them. Note, Sinners are not healed becauſe they would not be healed; Chriſt would have gathered them, and they would not. (2.) Then when ſome endeavours were uſed to reform and reclaim them, that wickedneſs which had been reſtrained and kept under, broke out; and from God's ſteps towards the healing of them, they took occaſion to be ſo much the more provoking. When endeavours were uſed to reform them, vice grew more impetuous, more outrageous, and ſwelled ſo much the higher, as a ſtream when it is dammed up; when they began to proſper, they grew more proud, wanton and ſecure, and ſo ſtopt the progreſs of their cure. Note, It is ſin that turns away good things from us, then when they are coming towards us; and it is the folly and ruin of multitudes, that when God would do well for them they do ill for themſelves. And what was it that did them this miſchief? In one word, they commit falſhood, they worſhip idols, ſo ſome, defraud one another, ſo others, or rather, they diſſemble with God in their profeſſions of repentance and regard to him. They ſay, they are deſirous to be healed by him, and in order to that, willing to be ruled by him, but they lye unto him with their mouth, and flatter him with their tongue.

3. A practical diſbelief of God's omniſcience and government was at the bottom of all their wickedneſs, *ver. 2. They conſider not in their hearts*, they never ſay it to their own hearts, never think of this that I remember all their wickedneſs. As if God either could not ſee it, tho' he is all eye, or did not heed it, tho' his name is jealous, or had forgot it tho' he is an eternal mind, that can never be unmindful; or would not reckon for it, tho' he is the judge of heaven and earth. This is the ſinners atheiſm, as good ſay there is no God, as ſay he is either ignorant or forgetful, none that judgeth in the earth, as ſay, he remembers not the things he is to give judgment upon; it is a high affront they put upon God, it is a damning cheat they put upon themſelves; they ſay, the Lord ſhall not ſee, *Pſal. xciv. 7.* They cannot but know that God remembers all their works, they have been told it many a time, nay, if you aſk them, they cannot but own it, and yet they do not conſider it; they do not think of it when they ſhould, and with application to themſelves and their own works, elſe they would not, they durſt not do as they do. But the time will come when thoſe who thus deceive themſelves ſhall be undeceived; now their own doings have beſet them about, i. e. They are come at length to ſuch a pitch of wickedneſs that their ſins appear on every ſide of them; all their neighbours ſee how bad they are, and can they think that God doth not ſee it? Or rather, the puniſhment of their doings beſets them about, they are ſurrounded, and embarrassed with troubles, ſo that they cannot get out; by which it appears that the ſins they ſmart for are before my face; not only that I have ſeen them, but that I am diſpleaſed at them, for till God by pardoning our ſins hath caſt them behind his back, they are ſtill before his face. Note, Sooner or later, God will convince thoſe who do not now conſider it, that he remembers all their works.

4. God had begun to contend with them by his judgments, in earneſt of what was further coming; the thief comes in, and the troop of robbers ſpoils without. Some take this as an inſtance of their wickedneſs that they robbed and ſpoiled one another; *Nec hoſpes ab hoſpite tutus.* It ſeems rather to be a puniſhment of of their ſin; they were infeſted with ſecret thieves among themſelves, that robbed their houſes and ſhops, and picked their pockets, and troops of robbers, foreign invaders, that with open violence ſpoil abroad; ſo far was Iſrael from being healed, that they had

had fresh wounds given them daily by robbers and spoilers. And all this the effect of sin, all to punish them for robbing God, *Isa. xlii. 24. Mal. iii. 8, 11.*

(2.) A particular account of the sins of the court, the kings and princes, and those about them, and the tokens of God's displeasure they were under for them.

1. Their king and princes were pleased with the wickedness and profaneness of their subjects, who were emboldened thereby to be so much the more wicked, *ver. 3. They make the king and princes glad with their wickedness.* It pleased them to see the people conform to their wicked laws and examples, in the worship of their idols, and other instances of impiety and immorality; and to hear them flatter and applaud them in their wicked ways; when Herod saw that his wickedness pleased the people he proceeded further in it; much more will the people do so when they see it pleaseth the prince. *Acts xii. 3.* Particularly, they made them glad with their lyes, with the lying praises with which they crowned the favourites of the prince, and the lying calumnies and censures with which they blackened those, whom they knew the princes had a dislike of; those that shew themselves pleased with slanders, and ill-natured stories shall never want those about them that will fill their ears with such stories; *Prov. xxix. 12. If a ruler hearken to lyes, all his servants are wicked,* and will make him glad with their lyes.

2. Drunkenness and revelling abounded much at the court, *ver. 5.* The day of our king was a merry day with them, either his birth-day or his inauguration-day, of which, it is probable, they had an anniversary observation; or perhaps it was some holyday of his appointing, which was therefore called his day; on that day the princes met to drink the king's health, and got him among them, to be merry, and made him sick with bottles of wine. It should seem that the king did not ordinarily drink to excess, but he was now upon a high day brought to it by the artifices of the princes, tempted by the goodness of the wine, the gaiety of the company, or the healths they urged; and so little was he used to it that it made him sick; and it is justly charged as a crime, as *crimen læsæ majestatis*, upon those who thus imposed upon him, and made him sick; nor would it serve for an excuse that it was the day of their king, but was rather an aggravation of the crime, that when they pretended to do him honour, they dishonoured him to the highest degree. If it is a great affront and injury to a common person to make him drunk, and there is a *wo* to those that do it, *Hab. ii. 15.* much more to a crowned head; for the greater any man's dignity is, the greater disgrace it is to him to be drunk. *It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine,* *Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.* See what a prejudice the sin of drunkenness is to a man, to a king, (1.) In his health, it made him sick; it is a force upon nature; and strange it is by what charms, men otherwise rational enough, can be drawn to that, which besides the offence it gives to God, and the damage it doth to their spiritual and eternal welfare is a present disorder and distemper to their own bodies. (2.) In his honour; for when he was thus intoxicated he stretched out his hand with scorn; then he that was intrusted with the government of a kingdom lost the government of himself; and so far forgot, (1.) The dignity of a king that he made himself familiar with players, and buffoons, and those whose company was a scandal. (2.) The duty of a king that he joined in confederacy with atheists, and the profane scoffers at religion, whom he ought to have silenced and put to shame; he sat in the seat of the scornful, of those that are arrived at the highest pitch of impiety; he struck in with them, said as they said, did as they did, and exerted his power, and stretched forth the hand of his government in concurrence with them. Goodness and good men are often made the song of the drunkards, *Psal. lxix. 12—xxxv. 16.* but *wo unto thee, O land, when thy king is such a child as to stretch forth his hand with those that make them so,* *Eccl. x. 16.*

3. Adultery and uncleanness prevailed much among the courtiers. This is spoken of, *ver. 4, 6, 7.* and that of drunkenness comes in in the midst of this article; for wine is oil to the fire of lust, *Prov. xxiii. 33.* Those that are inflamed with fleshly lusts, that are adulterers, *ver. 4.* are here again and again compared, to an oven heated by the baker, *ver. 4. they have made ready their heart like an oven,* *ver. 6. they are all hot as an oven,* *ver. 7.* Note, 1. An unclean heart is like an oven heated; and the unclean lusts and affections of it are as the fuel, that make it hot. It is an inward fire, it keeps the heat within itself, so adulterers and fornicators secretly burn in lust, as the expression is, *Rom. i. 27.* The heat of the oven is an intense heat, especially as it is here described; he that heats it stirs up the fire, and ceaseth not from raising it up, till the bread is ready to be put in, being kneaded and leavened. All which only signifies that they are like an oven when it is at the hottest. Nay, when it is too hot for the baker, (so the learned Dr Pocock) when it is hotter than he would have it, so that the raiser up of the fire ceaseth so long as while the dough that is kneaded is in the fermenting, that the heat may abate a little. Thus fiery hot are the lusts of an unclean heart. 2. The unclean wait for an opportunity to compass their wicked desires; having made ready their heart like an oven they lie in wait, to catch their prey; *The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight* *Job xxiv. 15. Their*

baker sleeps all the night, but in the morning it burneth as a flaming fire, i. e. As the baker having kindled a fire in his oven, and laid sufficient fuel to it, goes to bed and sleeps all night, and in the morning finds his oven well heated and ready for his purpose; so these wicked people when they have laid some wicked plot and formed a design for the gratifying of some covetous, ambitious, revengeful or unclean lusts, have their hearts so fully set in them to do evil, that tho' they may stifle them for a while, yet the fire of corrupt affections is still glowing within, and as soon as ever there is an opportunity for it, their purposes which they have compassed and imagined break out into overt acts, as a fire flames out when it has vent given it. Thus they are all hot as an oven. Note, Lust in the heart is like fire in an oven, puts it into a heat; but the day is coming when those who thus make themselves like a fiery oven with their own vile affections, if that fire be not extinguished by divine grace, shall be made as a fiery oven by divine wrath, *Psal. xxi. 9. when the day comes that shall burn as an oven,* *Mal. iv. 1.*

4. They resist the proper methods of reformation and redress; they have devoured their judges, those few good judges that were among them, that would have put out these fires, with which they were heated, they fell foul upon them, and would not suffer them to do justice, but were ready to stone them, and perhaps did so; or, as some think, they provoked God to deprive them of the blessing of magistracy, and to leave all in confusion; all their kings are fallen one after another, and their families with them; which could not but put the kingdom into confusion, crumble it into contending parties, and occasion a great deal of bloodshed; there are heart-burnings among them, they are hot as an oven with rage and malice at one another, and this occasions the devouring of their judges, the falling of their kings; for the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof, *Prov. xxviii. 2.* But in the midst of all this trouble and disorder, there is none among them that calls unto God, that sees his hand stretched out against them in these judgments, and deprecates the strokes of it; none, or next to none that stir up themselves to take hold on God, *Isa. lxiv. 7.* Note, Those are not only heated with sin, but hardened in sin, that continue to live without prayer, even when they are in trouble and distress.

8. Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people, Ephraim is a cake not turned. 9. Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not. 10. And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face, and they do not return to the LORD their God, nor seek him for all this. 11. ¶ Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria. 12. When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them, I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven, I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard. 13. Wo unto them, for they have fled from me: destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lyes against me. 14. And they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me. 15. Though I have bound, and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me. 16. They return, but not to the most High: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue: this shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Having seen how vicious and corrupt the court was, we now come to enquire how it is with the country, and we find that to be no better, and no marvel if the distemper that hath so seized the head affect the whole body, so that there is no soundness in it; the iniquity of Ephraim is discovered, as well as the sin of Samaria, of the people as well as the princes, of which here are divers instances.

1. They were not peculiar and entire for God, as they should have been, *ver. 8.* (1.) They did not distinguish themselves from the heathen, as God had distinguished them; Ephraim, he hath mingled himself among the people; hath associated with them, and conformed himself to them, and has in a manner confounded himself with them, and lost his character among them. God had said, *The people shall dwell alone, but they mingled themselves with the heathen, and learned their works,* *Psal. cvi. 35.* They went up and down among the heathen, to beg help of one of them against another, so some; whereas if they had kept close to God they had not needed the help of any of them. (2.) They were not entirely devoted to God; Ephraim is a cake not turned, and so is burnt on one side, and dough on the other side, but good for nothing on either side. As in Ahab's time so now they halted between God and Baal; sometimes they seemed zealous for God, but at other times as hot for Baal. Note, It is sad to think how

how many who after a fort profess religion are made up of contraries, and inconsistencies, *as a cake not turned*; a constant self-contradiction, and always in one extremum or the other.

2. They were strangely insensible of the judgments of God which they were under, and which threatened their ruin, *ver. 9.* Observe (1.) The condition they were in; God was now to them in his judgments as *a moth*, and as *rottenness*, they were silently and slowly drawing towards the ruin of the state; partly by the encroachments of foreigners upon them, *strangers have devoured his strength*, and eaten him up; they have wasted his wealth and treasure, lessened his numbers, and consumed the fruits of the earth; some devoured them by open wars, as *2 King. xiii. 7.* when the king of Syria made them *like the dust by threshing*, others by pretending treaties of peace and amity, in which they extorted abundance of wealth from them, and made them pay dear for that which did them no good, but which afterwards they paid dearer for, as *2 King. xvi. 9.* This Ephraim got by mingling himself with the heathen, and suffering them to mingle with him, they devoured that which he staid upon, and supported himself with. Note, Those that make not God their strength, (*Psal. lii. 7.*) make that their strength which will soon be devoured by strangers. They were thus reduced partly by their own male-administrations among themselves; *yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him*, (are sprinkled upon him, so the word is) *i. e.* the sad symptoms of a decaying declining state, that is *waxing old*, and *ready to vanish away*; and effects of trouble and vexation. *Cura facit canos.* The *almond-tree* doth not as yet flourish, but it begins to turn colour, which speaks aloud to him that the *evil days* are coming, and the *years of which he shall say*, he has *no pleasure in them*, *Eccle. xii. 1, 5.* (2.) Their regardlessness of these warnings. *He knows it not*; he is not aware of the hand of God gone out against him, it is lifted up, but he will not see, *Isa. xxvi. 11.* He doth not know how near his ruin is, and takes no care to prevent it. Note, Stupidity under lesser judgments is a preface of greater coming.

3. They went on frowardly in their wicked ways, and were not reclaimed by the rebukes they were under, *ver. 10.* The *pride of Israel* still testifies to his face, as it had done before, *chap. v. 5.* under humbling providences their hearts were still unhumbled, their lusts unmortified; and it is *through the pride of their countenance* that they will not seek after God. *Psal. x. 4.* they do not return to the Lord their God by repentance and reformation, nor do they seek him by faith and prayer for all this; tho' they suffer for going astray from him, tho' it can never be well with them till they come back to him, and tho' they have in vain sought to others for relief, yet they think not of applying to God.

4. They were infatuated in their counsels, and took very wrong methods when they were in distress, *ver. 11, 12.* *Ephraim is like a silly dove without an heart.* To be harmless as a dove without gall, and not to hurt or injure others is commendable, but to be sottish as a dove without heart, that knows not how to defend herself and provide for her own safety, is a shame. The *filthiness* of this dove is (1.) That she laments not the loss of her young that are taken from her, but will make her nest again in the same place; so they have their people carried away by the enemy and are not affected with it, but continue their dealings with those that deal barbarously with them. (2.) That she is easily enticed by the bait into the net, and has no heart, no understanding to discern her danger, as many other fowls do. *Prov. i. 17.* she *hasteth to the snare, and knows not that it is for her life*, *Prov. vii. 23.* so they were drawn into leagues with neighbour nations that were their ruin. (3.) That when she is frightened she has not courage to stay in the dove-house where she is safe, and under the careful protection of her owner, but flutters and hovers, seeking shelter first in one place, then in another, and thereby exposes herself so much the more: so this people, when they were in distress, sought not to God, did not fly like the doves to their windows, where they might have been secured from all the birds of prey that struck at them, but threw themselves out of God's protection, and then called to Egypt to help them, and went in all haste to Assyria, to seek for that aid in vain, which they might, by repentance and prayer, have found nearer home in their God. Note, It is a silly, senseless thing for those that have a God in heaven to go to trust to creatures for that refuge and relief that is to be had in him only; and they that do so are a *people of no understanding*, they are *without heart*.

Now see what comes of this *silly dove*, *ver. 12.* *When they shall go to Egypt and Assyria, I will spread my net upon them.* Note, Those that will not abide by the mercy of God must expect to be pursued by the justice of God. Here (1.) They are ensnared; *I will spread my net upon them*, bring them into straits, that they may see their folly, and think of returning. Note, it is common for those that go away from God to find snares there where they expected shelters. (2.) They are humbled; they soar upwards, proud of their foreign alliances, and confiding in them, but *I will bring them down*, let them fly never so high, as the fowls of the heaven, that are shot flying. Note, God can and will bring those down that exalt themselves as the eagle, *Obad. 3.* (3.) They are made to smart for their folly; *I will chastise them.* Note, The disappointments we meet with in the creature when we put a confidence in it are a necessary chastisement or

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discipline, that we may learn to be wiser another time. (4.) In all this the scripture is fulfilled; it is *as their congregation has heard*; they have been many a time told by the word of God read and preached, and sung in their religious assemblies, that *vain is the help of man, that in the son of man there is no help*; they have heard both from the law and from the prophets what judgments God would bring upon them for their wickedness, and *as they have heard, now they shall see, they shall feel.* Note, It concerns us to take notice of the word of God; which we hear from time to time in the congregation, and to be governed by it; for we must shortly be judged by it; and it will justify God in the condemnation of sinners, and aggravate it to them, that they have had plain publick warning given them of it, it is what their congregation has heard many a time, but they would not take warning. *Son remember thou wast told what would come of it, and now thou seest they were not vain words; Zech. i. 6.*

5. They revolted from God, and rebelled against him, notwithstanding the various methods he took to maintain them in their allegiance, *ver. 13, 14, 15.* Where observe,

1. How kindly and tenderly God had dealt with them, as a gracious sovereign towards a people dear unto him, and whose prosperity he had much at heart. He had redeemed them, *ver. 13*; brought them at first out of the land of Egypt, and since delivered them out of many a distress. He had bound and strengthened their arms, *ver. 15.* when their power was weakened, like an arm broke out of joint, God set it again, and bound it, as the surgeon doth a broken bone, to make it knit. God had given Israel victories over the Syrians, *2 King. xiii. 16, 17.* had restored their coast, *2 King. xiv. 25, 26.* had girded them with strength for battle. Though I have chastened them, so the margin reads it, sometimes corrected them for their faults, and thereby taught them, at other times strengthened their arms, and relieved them, tho' I have used both fair means and foul to work upon them, it was all to no purpose, they were mercy-proof, and judgment-proof.

2. How impudent their carriage had been towards him notwithstanding; which is described here for the conviction and humiliation of all those that have gone on in any way of wickedness, that they may see how exceeding sinful their sin is, how heinous, how the God of heaven interprets it, how he resents it: (1.) He had courted them to him, and taken them into covenant with himself, but they fled from him, as if he had been their dangerous enemy who had always approved himself their faithful friend; they wandered from him as the silly dove from her nest, for those who forsake God will find no rest or settlement in the creature, but wander endlessly. They fled from God when they forsook the worship of him, and run away from his service, and withdrew themselves from their allegiance to him. (2.) He had given them his laws, which were all holy, just, and good, by which he designed to keep them in the right way, but they transgressed against him, they sinned with a high hand, and a stiff neck, wilfully and presumptuously, so the word signifies; they broke through the fence of the divine law, and therein thwarted the design of the divine love. (3.) He had made known his truths to them, and given them all possible proofs of the sincerity of his good will to them, and yet they spoke lies against him, and set up false gods in competition with him, they denied his providence and power, thus they belied the Lord, *Jer. v. 12.* they rejected his messages sent them by his prophets, and said, They should have peace tho' they went on in sin, directly against what he said. In their hypocritical professions of religion, shews of devotion and promises of amendment, they lied to the Lord, which he took as lying against him. (4.) He was their rightful lord and king, and always ruled in Jacob with equity, and for the publick good, and yet they rebelled against him, *ver. 14.* They not only went off from him, but took up arms against him, would have deposed him if they could, and set up another. (5.) He designed well for them, but they imagined mischief against him, *ver. 15.* Sin is a mischievous thing, it is mischief against God, for it is treason against his crown and dignity; not that the sinners can do any thing to hurt their Creator (as one of the ancients observes on these words) but *what they can they do*; and it is so much the worse when it is not done by surprise, or through inadvertency, but designedly, and with contrivance; the Jews have a saying, which Dr Pocock quotes here, *The thoughts of transgression are worse than the transgression.* The designing of mischief is doing it in God's account; compassing and imagining the death of the king is treason by our law. They that imagine an ill thing, tho' it prove a vain thing, *Psal. ii. 1.* will be reckoned with for the imagination.

3. How they shall be punished for this, *ver. 13.* *Wo unto them, for they have fled from me.* Note, Those who fly from God have woes sent after them, and are without doubt in a woful case. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them, the wrath of God faith *wo to them*; and observe what follows immediately, *destruction unto them.* Note, The woes of God's word have real effects; destruction makes them good; the judgments of his hand shall verify the judgments of his mouth; those whom he curseth and pronounceth woful, they are cursed, they are woful indeed.

6. Their shews of devotion and reformation were but shews, and in them they did but mock God.

1. They pretended *devotion*, but it was not sincere, *ver. 14.* When the hand of God was gone forth against them, they made some sort of application to him, *When he slew them, then they sought him; Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*; but it was all in hypocrisy. (1.) When they were under personal troubles, and called upon God in secret, they were not sincere in that; *they have not cried unto me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds.* When they were chastened with pain upon their beds, and the multitude of their bones with strong pains, perhaps ill of the wounds they received in war, they cried, and groaned, and complained in the forms of devotion, and it may be they used many good words, proper enough for the circumstances they were in, they cried, *God help us*, and, *Lord, look upon us*; but they did not cry with their heart, and therefore God reckons it was no crying to him. Moses is said to cry unto God when he spoke not a word, only his heart prayed, with faith and fervency, *Exod. xiv. 15.* These here made a great noise, and said a deal, and yet did not cry to God, because their hearts were not right with him, not subjected to his will, devoted to his honour, or employed in his service. To pray is to lift up the soul to God, this is the essence of prayer; if that be not, words, tho' never so well worded, are but wind; but if there be that, it is an acceptable prayer, tho' the groanings cannot be uttered. Note, Those do not pray to God at all that do not pray in the spirit. Nay, God is so far from approving it, and accepting of it, that he calls it howling; some think it intimates the noisiness of their prayers, they cried to God, as they used to cry to Baal, when they thought he must be awaked; or the brutish violent passions which they vented in their prayers, they snarled at the stone, and howled under the whip, but regarded not the hand; or it notes that their hypocritical prayers were so far from pleasing God that they were offensive to him; he was angry at their prayers; the songs of the temple shall be howlings, *Amos viii. 3.* God will be so far from pitying them that he will justly laugh at their calamity, who have so often laughed at his authority. (2.) When they were under publick troubles, and met together to implore God's favour, in that also they were hypocritical, they assembled themselves, for fashion sake, because it was usual to call a solemn assembly in times of general mourning, *Zeph. ii. 1.* But it was only to pray for corn and wine that they came together, which was the thing they wanted, and feared being deprived of by the want of rain, the judgment they now laboured under; they did not pray for the favour and grace of God, that God would give them repentance, pardon their sins, and turn away his wrath, but only that he would not take away from them their corn and wine. Note, Carnal hearts in their prayers to God covet temporal mercies only, and dread and deprecate no other but temporal judgments, for they have no sense of any other.

2. They pretended *reformation*, but neither was that sincere, *ver. 16.* Here is (1.) The sin of Israel. *They return*, i. e. they make shew as if they would return, they take on them to repent and amend their doings, but they make nothing of it; they do not come home to God, nor return to their allegiance; whereas God saith, *Jer. iv. 1. If thou wilt return, O Israel, return to me*; do not only turn towards me, but return to me. This dissimulation of theirs makes them like a deceitful bow, which looks as if it were fit for business, and is bent and drawn accordingly; but when strength comes to be laid to it, either the bow or string breaks, and the arrow, instead of flying to the mark, drops at the archer's foot. Such were their essays towards repentance and reformation. (2.) The sin of the princes of Israel; that which is charged upon them is the rage of their tongue, quarrelling with God and his providence, and with all about them when they are crossed. Princes think they may say what they will, and that it is their prerogative to huff and bluster, to curse, and rail, and call names at their pleasure, but let them know there is a God above them that will call them to an account for the rage of their tongues, and make their own tongues to fall upon them. (3.) The punishment of Israel and their princes for their sin. As for the princes, they shall fall by the sword, either of their enemies, or of their own people, some by one, and some by the other; and this shall be their derision, this is that for which they shall be derided in the land of Egypt, when they flee to the Egyptians for succour, *ver. 11.* Their sin and punishment shall make them a laughing-stock to all about them. Note, Those that are treacherous and deceitful in their dealings with God, and passionate and outrageous in their carriage towards men, will justly be made a derision to their neighbours, for they make themselves ridiculous.

C H A P. VIII.

This chapter, as that before, divides itself into the sins and punishments of Israel, every verse almost speaks both; and all to bring them to repentance; when they saw the malignant nature of their sin in the descriptions of that, they could not but be convinced how much it was their duty to repent of what was so ill in itself; and when they saw the mischievous consequences of their sin, in the predictions of them, they could not but see how much it was their interest to repent for the preventing of them. (1.) The sin of Israel is here set forth (1.) In many general expressions, *ver. 1, 3, 12, 14.* (2.) In many particular instances, setting up kings without God, *ver. 4.* and setting up idols against God, *ver. 4, 5, 6, 11.* and courting alliances with the neighbour nations, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* (3.) In this aggravation of it, that they still kept up a profession of religion, and relation to God, *ver. 2, 13, 14.*—(2.) The punishment of Israel is here set forth as answering the sin. God would bring an enemy upon them, *ver. 1, 3.* All their projects should be blasted, *ver. 7.* Their confidence both in their idols, and in their foreign alliances should disappoint them, *ver. 6, 8, 10.* Their strength at home should fail them, *ver. 14.* their secrets should have no reckoning made of them, and their sins should have a reckoning made for them, *ver. 13.*

1. **S**et the trumpet to thy mouth: he shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. 2. Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. 3. Israel hath cast off the thing that is good: the enemy shall pursue him. 4. They have set up kings, but not by me: they have made princes, and I knew it not: of their silver and their gold have they made them idols, that they may be cut off. 5. ¶ Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency? 6. For from Israel was it also, the workman made it, therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces. 7. For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind: it hath no stalk: the bud shall yield no meal: if so be it yield, the stranger shall swallow it up.

The reproofs and threatnings here are introduced with an order to the prophet to set the trumpet to his mouth, *ver. 1.* thus to call a solemn assembly, that all might take notice of what he had to deliver, and take warning by it. He must sound an alarm, must, in God's name, proclaim war with this rebellious nation; an enemy is coming with speed and fury to seize their land, and he must awaken them to expect it. Thus the prophet must do the part of a watchman, that was by sound of trumpet to call the besieged to stand to their arms, when he saw the besiegers making their attack, *Ezek. xxxiii. 3.* The prophet must lift up his voice like a trumpet, *Isa. lviii. 1.* and the people must hearken to the sound of the trumpet, *Jer. vi. 17.*

Now, 1. Here is a general charge drawn up against them as sinners, as rebels and traitors against their sovereign Lord. (1.) They have transgressed my covenant, *ver. 1.* They have not only transgressed the command, every sin doth that, but they have transgressed the covenant, they have been guilty of such sins as break the original contract, they have revolted from their allegiance, and violated the marriage-covenant by their spiritual whoredom; have, in effect, declared they will be no longer God's people, nor take him for their God, that is transgressing the covenant; they have not only done foolishly, but have dealt deceitfully. (2.) They have trespassed against my law; in many particular instances. God's law is the rule by which we are to walk, and this is the malignity of sin, that it trespasses upon the bounds set us by that law. (3.) They have cast off the thing that is good. They have put away and rejected good, i. e. God himself, so some understand it, and very fitly. He is good, and doth good, and is our goodness; there is none good but one, that is God; the fountain of all good. They have cast him off, as not desiring to have any thing more to do with him; God was abandoning them to ruin, and here gives the reason for it. Note, God never casts off any till they first cast him off. Or, as we read it, they have cast off the thing that is good, they have cast off the service and worship of God, which is in effect casting God off. They have cast off that which denominates men good, they have cast off the fear of God, and the regard of man, and all sense of virtue



virtue and honesty. Observe, *They have transgressed my covenant, it is come to that at last, for they trespassed against my law, breaking the command and made way for breaking the covenant; and they did that, for they cast off that which was good; there it began first. They left off to be wise and to do good, and then they went all to naught, Psal. xxxvi. 3. See the method of apostasy, men first cast off that which is good. Then those omissions make way for commissions; and frequent actual transgressions of God's law, bring men at length to an habitual renouncing of his covenant. When men cast off praying, and hearing, and sabbath sanctification, and other things that are good, they are in the high road to a total forsaking of God.*

2. Here are general threatenings of wrath and ruin for their sin; *the enemy shall come as an eagle against the house of the Lord, and ver. 3. shall pursue him.* If by *the house of the Lord* we understand the temple at Jerusalem, by the eagle that comes against it, we must suppose to be meant either Sennacherib, who had taken all the fenced cities of Judah, laid siege to Jerusalem, and, no doubt, aimed at the house of the Lord, to lay that waste as he had done the temples of the gods of other nations; or Nebuchadnezzar, who burnt the temple, and made a prey of the vessels of the temple; but if we make it to point at the destruction of the kingdom of the ten tribes by the king of Assyria, we must reckon it is the body of that people, which as Israelites to whom *perpetuated the adoption, the glory and the covenants*, is here called *the house of the Lord*. They thought their being so would be their protection; but the prophet is bid to tell them, that now they had lost the life and spirit of their religion, though they still retained the name and form of it, they were but as a carcass to which the eagles, and other birds of prey should be gathered together. The enemy shall pursue them *as an eagle*, so swiftly, so strongly, so furiously. Note, Those that break their covenant of friendship with God, expose themselves to the enmity of all about them, to whom they make themselves a cheap and easy prey; and their having been *the house of the Lord*, and his living temples, will be no excuse or refuge to them. See Amos iii. 2.

3. Here is the peoples hypocritical claim of relation to God when they were in trouble and distress. *Ver. 2. Israel shall cry unto me, i. e. when either they are threatened with these judgments, and would plead an exemption; or when the judgments are inflicted on them, and they apply themselves to God for relief, pouring out a prayer when God's chastening is upon them, they will plead that among them, God is known, and his name is great, Psal. lxxvi. 1. and in their distress will pretend to that knowledge of God's ways, which in their prosperity they desired not but despised. They will then cry unto God, will call him their God, and (as impudent beggars) will tell him they are well acquainted with him, and have known him long. Note, There are many who in works deny God, and disown him, yet to serve a turn will profess that they know him, they know more of him than some of their neighbours do. But what stead will it stand a man in to be able to say, My God, I know thee, when he cannot say, my God, I love thee, and my God, I serve thee, and cleave to thee only.*

4. Here is the prophet's expostulation with them in God's name. *Ver. 5. How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* It is not meant of absolute innocency, that is what the guilty can never attain to, but how long will it be ere they repent and reform; ere they become innocent in this matter, and free from the sin of idolatry? They are wedded to their idols, how long will it be ere they are weaned from them? *ere they are able to get clear of them?* so it might be rendered. This intimates that custom in sin makes it very difficult for men to part with it. It is hard to cleanse from that filthiness either of flesh or spirit which has been long wallowed in. But God speaks as if he thought the time long till sinners cast away their iniquities, and come to live a new life. He complains of their obstinacy, that is it that keeps his anger against them burning, which would soon be turned away if they did but *attain to innocency* from those sins that kindled it. They in trouble cry, *how long* will it be ere God return to us in a way of mercy, but they do not hear him ask, *how long* will it be ere they return to God in a way of duty?

5. Here are some particular sins which they are charged with, are convicted of the folly of, and warned of the fatal consequences of; and for which God's anger is kindled against them.

1. In their civil affairs, they set up kings without God, and in contempt of him, *ver. 4.* So they did when they rejected Samuel, in whom the Lord was their king, and chose Saul, that they might be like the nations; so they did when they revolted from their allegiance to the house of David, and set up Jeroboam, wherein though they fulfilled God's secret counsel, yet they neither aimed at his glory, nor consulted his oracle, nor applied themselves to him by prayer for direction, nor had any regard to his providence, but were led by their own humour, and hurried on by the impetus of their own passions; so they did now about the time when Hosea prophesied; when it seems to have grown fashionable to set up kings and depose them again, according as the contenders for the crown could make an interest, 2 Kings xv. 8; &c. Note, We cannot expect comfort and success in our affairs when we go about them, and go on in them without consulting

God, and acknowledge not him in all our ways. They set up kings, and I know it not, i. e. I did not know it from them, they did not ask counsel at my mouth, whether they might lawfully do it, or whether it would be best for them to do it, though they had prophets and oracles with whom they might have advised. They look not to the holy One of Israel, Isa. xxxi. 1. nor did the princes do as Jephthah, who before he took upon him the government, uttered all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh. Judg. xi. 11. Note, Those that are entrusted with publick concerns, and particularly with the election and nomination of magistrates, ought to take God along with them therein, by desiring his direction, and designing his honour.

2. In their religious matters they did much worse, for they set up calves against God, in competition with him, and contradiction to him. Of their silver and their gold which God gave them and multiplied to them, that they might serve and honour him with it, they have made them idols; they called them gods, 1 Kings xii. 28. Behold thy gods, O Israel; but God calls them idols; the word signifies griefs or troubles, because they are offensive to God, and will be ruining to those that worship them. Their silver and their gold they have made to them idols. So the words are, referring primarily to the images of their gods, which they made of gold and silver, especially the golden calves at Dan and Bethel. Idolaters spare no cost in worshipping their idols. But they are very applicable to the spiritual idolatry of the covetous; their silver and their gold are the gods they place their happiness in; set their hearts upon, to which they pay their homage, and in which they put their confidence.

Now to shew them the folly of their idolatry, he tells them,

1. Whence their gods came. Trace them to their original, and they will be found the creatures of their own fancies, and the work of their own hands, *ver. 6.* The calf they worshipped is here called *the calf of Samaria*, because it is probable when Samaria in Ahab's time became the metropolis of the kingdom, a calf was set up there, to be near the court, besides those at Dan and Bethel, or perhaps one of those was removed thither; for those that are for new gods will still be for newer. Now let them consider what this god of theirs owed its rise and being to. (1.) To their own invention and institution; *from Israel was it also.* Not from the God of Israel, he expressly forbid it, but from Israel, it was a device of their own, some think not borrowed from any of their neighbours, no, not from the Egyptians; for though they worshipped Apis in a living cow, they never worshipped a golden calf, that was from Israel; it was *their own iniquity*. Now could that be worthy of their worship which was a contrivance of their own? It was from Israel, i. e. the gold and silver of which it was made was collected from the people of Israel, by a bribe; it was a poor god that was framed by contribution. (2.) It was owing to skill and labour of the craftsman, Deut. xxvii. 15. *The workmen made it, therefore it is not God.* This is a very cogent conclusive argument, and the inference so very plain, that one would think their own thoughts should have suggested it to them, so as to make them ashamed of their idolatry. What can be more absurd than for men to worship that as a God giving being and good to them, which they themselves gave being to, (both matter and form) but could not give life to? A made god is no God: This is a self-evident truth; and yet St Paul was accused as criminal for preaching that *they be no gods which are made with hands*, Acts xix. 26. And this here which should have turned them from their idols comes in as a reason why they were inseparably wedded to them; therefore they could not attain to innocency, i. e. because it was from themselves; they were willing to have gods of their own to do what they pleased with, that they themselves might do what they pleased.

2. What their gods would come to. If they are not gods they will not last; nay, if they pretend to be gods they will be reckoned with, *The calf of Samaria shall be broken to pieces*, and those that would not yield to the force of the former argument shall be convinced by this, that it is not God, but an unprofitable idol, as the Chaldee calls it. It shall be broken to shivers like a potter's vessel, though it be a golden calf. It shall be chips or saw-dust; it shall be a spider's web. So St Jerom. It seems to allude to Moses's grinding the golden calf to powder that was in his time. This shall be served as that was; Sennacherib boasted what he had done to Samaria and her idols, Isa. x. 11. Note, Deifying any creature makes way for the destruction of it. If they had made vessels and ornaments for themselves of their silver and gold, they might have remained; but if they make gods of them, they shall be broken to pieces.

3. What their gods would bring them to. The breaking of them to pieces would be a disappointment to those who trusted in them. But that was not all, *They have made themselves idols that they may be cut off*, *ver. iv.* that their gold and silver which they so abused may be cut off, so some take it, nay, that they may themselves be cut off from God, from their own land, from the land of the living. Their idolatry will as certainly end in their extirpation, as if they had purposely designed it. And when this proves to be the effect of their sin, what relief will they have from the gods wherein they trusted? None at all; *Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off*; i. e. it cannot give thee any help in thy

thy distress, and the pleasure thou now takest in it will vanish, and be no pleasure to thee. Those that were justly sent to the gods whom they had chosen found them *miserable comforters*, Judg. x. 14. If men will not quit the love and service of sin, yet they shall certainly lose all the delights and profits of it. If Samaria had continued firm and faithful to the God of Israel, he would have been a present powerful help to her, but *the calf* she preferred before him was a broken reed. The case will be the same with those that make *their silver and their gold* their god. It will *cast them off*, and not *profit them in the day of wrath*, Ezek. vii. 19. Note, Those that suffer themselves to be deceived into any idolatries, will certainly find themselves deceived in them. Cardinal Wolfey owned, that if he had served his God as faithfully as he had served his prince, he would not have *cast him off*, as his prince did, in his old age.

Their disappointment in their idols is illustrated, ver. 7. by a similitude which speaks both that and the destruction which God brought upon them for their idolatry. (1.) They got no good to themselves by worshipping idols. *They have sown the wind*. They have put themselves to a great deal of trouble and expence to make and worship their idols, have made a business of it as much as the husbandman doth of sowing his corn, in expectation of reaping some mighty advantage by it, and that they should be as prosperous and victorious as the neighbour nations were that worshipped idols. But it is all a cheat; it is like *sowing the wind*, which can yield no increase; they *labour in vain, labour for the wind*, Eccl. v. 16. They take great pains to no purpose, and *weary themselves for very vanity*, Hab. ii. 13. They that make an idol of this world, do so, they *set their eyes on that which is not*, which like the wind makes a great noise, but has nothing substantial in it. (2.) They brought ruin upon themselves by it; they shall *reap the whirlwind*; a great whirlwind, so the word signifies, which shall hurry them away and dash them to pieces. They not only have not their false gods *for them*, but they set the true God *against them*; their favour will stand them in no more stead than *the wind*, but his wrath will do them more mischief than a *whirlwind*. As a man sows so shall he reap; 'If it may be supposed that a man should sow the wind, and cover it with earth, or keep it there for a while penned up, what could he expect but that it should be enforced by its being shut up, and the accession of what might increase its strength to break forth again in greater quantities with greater violence.' So Dr Pocock. They promise themselves plenty, peace and victory by worshipping idols, but their expectations come to nothing; what they sow never comes up; it has *no stalk*, no blade, or if it have, *the bud shall yield no meal*, it shall be as the thin ears, in Pharaoh's dream, that were blasted with the *east wind*, and there was nothing in them; or *if it yield*, if they do prosper for a while in their idolatrous courses, *the strangers shall swallow it up*, it shall be so far from doing them any service, that it shall be but as a bait to invite strangers to *invade* them, and as a spoil to enrich those strangers and enable them to do so much the more mischief. Note, The service of idols is an *unprofitable service*, and the works of darkness *unfruitful*; nay, in the end they will be pernicious; Rom. vi. 21. *the end of those things is death*. They that *sow iniquity* reap *vanity*; nay, they that *sow to the flesh* reap *corruption*; the hopes of sinners will be cheats, and their gains will be snares.

8. Israel is swallowed up: now shall they be among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure. 9. For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself: Ephraim hath hired lovers. 10. Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes. 11. Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be unto him to sin. 12. I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing. 13. They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it; but the LORD accepteth them not: now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins: they shall return to Egypt. 14. For Israel hath forgotten his maker, and buildeth temples; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities: but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

It was the honour and happiness of Israel that they had but one God to trust to, and he all-sufficient, in every strait; and but one God to serve, and he well worthy of all their devotions; but it was their sin, and folly, and shame, that they knew not when they were well; that they forsook their own mercies for lying vanities; for,

1. They multiplied their alliances; ver. 9. *they have hired lovers*, or, as the margin reads it, *they have hired loves*; they were at great expence to purchase the friendship of the nations about them, that otherwise had no value or affection at all for

them, nor cared for having any thing to do with them, but only upon the Shechemites principles, shall not their cattle, and their substance be ours? Gen. xxxiv. 23. Had Israel maintained the honour of their peculiarity, the nations about would have continued to admire them *as a wise and understanding people*, but when they profaned their own crown, their neighbours despised them, and they had no interest in them further than they paid dear for it. But those sure have carried themselves ill among their neighbours, who have no loves, no lovers but what they hire. See here,

2. The contempt that Israel lay under among the nations, ver. 8. *Israel is swallowed up*, devoured by strangers, their land eaten up, ver. 7. and themselves too; and being impoverished they have quite lost their credit and reputation, like a merchant that is become a bankrupt, so that they are *among the Gentiles, as a vessel wherein is no pleasure*, a vessel of dishonour, 2 Tim. ii. 20. a *despised broken vessel*, Jer. xxii. 28. None of their neighbours have any value for them, nor care to have any thing to do with them. Note, Those that have professed religion, if they degenerate and grow profane, are of all men the most contemptible; *if the salt have lost its savour*, it is fit for nothing but to be *trodden under foot of men*. Or, it notes their dispersion and captivity *among the Gentiles*; they shall be among them poor and prisoners, and who has pleasure in such?

2. The court that Israel made to the nations notwithstanding, ver. 9. They are *gone to Assyria*, to engage the king of Assyria to help them, and herein they are as a *wild ass alone by himself*, foolish, and headstrong, and unruly, they will have their way, and nothing shall hold them in, no, not the bridle of God's laws, nothing shall turn them back, no, not the sword of God's wrath. They take a course *by themselves*, and the effect will be that like a *wild ass by himself*, they will be the easier and surer prey to the lion. See Job xi. 12. Jer. ii. 24. Note, Man is in nothing more like the wild asses colt than in seeking for that succour and satisfaction in the creature that is to be had in God only.

3. The crosses that they were likely to meet with in their alliances with the neighbour nations, ver. 10. *Though they have hired among the nations*, and hoped thereby to prevent their own ruin, yet now will I gather them, as *the sheaves in the floor*, Mic. iv. 8. So that what they provided for their own safety, shall but make them the easier prey to their enemies. Note, There is no fence against the judgments of God when they come with commission; nay, that which men hire for their own preservation, often contributes to their own destruction. See Isa. vii. 20. The king of Assyria whose friendship they courted, called himself a *king of princes*, Isa. x. 8. *Are not my princes altogether kings?* he laid burthens upon Israel, levied taxes upon them, 2 Kings xv. 19, 29. And for these *they shall sorrow a little*, i. e. this shall be but a little burthen to them in comparison of what they may further expect; or, they will be but little sensible of this grievance, will not lay it to heart, and therefore may expect heavier judgments. *They have begun to be diminished* (so some read it) *by the burthen of the king of princes*, but this is only the *beginning of sorrows*, Matth. xxiv. 8. *the beginning of revenges*, Deut. xxxii. 42. Note, God often comes gradually with his judgments upon a provoking people; that he may shew how slow he is to wrath, and may awaken them to repentance; but they that are made to *sorrow a little* if they are not thereby brought to sorrow after a godly sort will another day be made to *sorrow a great deal*, to sorrow everlastingly.

2. They multiplied their altars and temples. Observe,

1. How they *denied the power of godliness*; and wholly cast that off, ver. 12. *I have written to him the great things of my law*; that speaks the privilege they enjoyed, as having God's statutes and judgments made known to them; and being intrusted with the lively oracles. Note, 1. The things of God's law are *great things*, they are *Magnalia Dei*. They are things that speak the greatness of the law-maker, and things of great use and great importance to us, they are our life, and our eternal welfare depends upon our observance of them, and obedience to them; they will make us great if we make a right use of them; and they are things which God will magnify and make honourable. 2. It is a great privilege to have the things of God's law *written*; thus they are reduced to a greater certainty, spread the further, and last the longer, with much less danger of being embezzled and corrupted than if they were transmitted by word of mouth only. 3. The things of God's law are of his own writing, for Moses and the prophets were his amanuenses, and holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. 4. It is the advantage of those that are members of the visible church that these great things are *written to them*, are intended for their direction, and so they must receive them; what things were written in former ages were written *for our learning*; and are profitable for us. And if they were happy that had the *great things of God's law* written to them, how much happier are we that have the much *great things* of his gospel written to us! But see how this privilege was slighted, these great things of the law were *counted as a strange thing*; as *unintelligible* and unreasonable, which might therefore be slighted because not to be fathomed, not to be accounted for; or as *foreign*, and things of no concernment to them; things that they had nothing to do with, nor were to be governed by; they used

used those things as strangers, which they were shy of, and knew not how to bid welcome; *we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* Note, 1. God having written us the great things of his law, we ought to make them familiar to us, as our nearest relations, *Prov. vii. 3, 4.* for therefore we have them written that they may *talk with us*, *Prov. vi. 22.* 2. *We make nothing* of the things of God's law, if we *make strange* of them, as if they did not affect us, and therefore we need not be affected with them.

2. How they *kept up the form of godliness*, notwithstanding, and to what little purpose they did so.

1. *They multiplied their altars*, ver. 11. *Ephraim made many altars to sin.* God appointed that there should be but one altar for sacrifice, *Deut. xii. 3, 5.* but the ten tribes having forsaken that, yet would still be thought very devout, and zealous for the honour of God, and as if they would make amends for the affront they put on God's altar, they made *many altars*, dedicated to the God of Israel, whom hereby they *intended*, or at least *pretended*, to give glory to; but that would not justify their violation of God's express command, nor would the example of the patriarchs, who before the law of Moses had many altars. No, they *made many altars to sin*, i. e. they did that which turned into sin to them; and therefore these *altars shall be unto him to sin*; i. e. God will charge it upon them as a heinous sin, and put that upon the score of their crimes, which they designed to be for the expiation of their crimes! Or, they shall be to him an occasion of further sin. Their multiplying of altars dedicated to the God of Israel, would introduce altars dedicated to other gods. Note, It is a great sin to corrupt the worship of God, and it will be charged as *sin* upon them that do it, how plausible soever their pretensions may be. And the way of this, as other sins, is down-hill; those that once deviate from the fixed rule of God's commands will wander endlessly.

2. *They multiplied their sacrifices*, ver. 13. Their altars were smoking altars, and they *sacrificed flesh for the sacrifices of God's offerings*, and they celebrated their feasts upon their sacrifices; they were at a great expence upon their devotions, and (as those commonly are who set up their own inventions in the room of divine institutions) were very *zealous* in their way; as if they hoped by their impositions on themselves to atone for the contempt of the great atonement; and by their observing a ceremonial law of their own, to excuse themselves from the obligation of all God's moral precepts. But how doth it speed? (1.) God makes no reckoning of their services. *The Lord accepteth them not*; how should he? when they did not offer their sacrifice upon that altar which alone *sanctified the gift*? And when they only sacrificed *flesh*, but not the spiritual sacrifice of a penitent believing heart. Note, Those services only are acceptable to God which are performed according to the rule of his word, and *through Jesus Christ*, 1 Pet. ii. 5. (2.) He takes that occasion to reckon with them for their sins; now will he, instead of pardoning their iniquity, and blotting out their sins, as they expected, *remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*; such an *abomination to the Lord* are the *sacrifices of the wicked*, that they provoke him to call them to an account for all their other abominations; when they think by their *sacrifices* to bribe the Judge of heaven and earth into a connivance at their wickedness, he will resent that as the highest affront they can put upon him, and it shall be the measure-filling sin. Note, A petition for leave to sin amounts to an imprecation of the curse for sin, and so it shall be answered, *according to the multitude of the idols.* I will punish their sins, *for they shall return to Egypt*, i. e. They shall be carried captive into Assyria, which shall be to them a house of bondage, as Egypt was to their fathers. Or it refers to *Deut. xxviii. ult.* where returning to Egypt is made to close and complete the miseries of that sinful nation.

3. *They multiplied their temples*; and these also in honour of the true God, as they pretended, but really in contempt of the choice he had made of Jerusalem to *put his name there.* *Israel has forgotten his Maker*, ver. 14. They pretended to *know him*, and yet *forgot him*, for they *liked not to retain God in their knowledge*, when the remembrance of him would give check to their lusts: it was an aggravation of their sin in forgetting God that he was *their Maker*, *Deut. xxxii. 15, 18.* *Job xxxv. 10.* as nothing is more obliging to us to remember him than that he is *our Creator*, *Ecccl. xii. 1.* He has *forgotten his Maker and builds temples*; he seems by the temples he builds to be mindful of his Maker, and to be desirous still to keep him in mind, and yet really he has *forgotten him*, because he has cast off the fear of him. Some by temples here understand *palaces*, for so the word sometimes signifies. *He has forgotten his Maker*, and yet is so secure and haughty, that he sets his judgments at defiance, as Nebuchadnezzar did when he said, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* Judah is likewise charged with *multiplying fenced cities*, and trusting in them for safety, when the judgments of God were abroad. To fortify their cities in subjection and subordination to God was well enough; but to fortify them in opposition to God, and without any regard to him or his providence, *Isa. xxii. 11.* shews their hearts to be desperately *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* But *none ever hardened his heart against God and prospered*, nor shall they, *God will send a fire upon his cities*, upon the cities
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both of Judah and Israel, not only the head cities of Jerusalem and Samaria, but all the other cities of those two kingdoms, and it shall devour not only the cottages, but *the palaces thereof*; tho' never so strong the fire shall master them; tho' never so stately and sumptuous, the fire shall not spare them. This was fulfilled when all the cities of Israel were laid in ashes by the king of Assyria, and all the cities of Judah. The fires they both kindled were of his sending, and when he judgeth he will overcome.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter (1.) God threatens to deprive this degenerate seed of Israel of all their worldly enjoyments, because by sin they had forfeited their title to them; so that they should have no comfort either in receiving them themselves, or offering them to God; ver. 1—5. (2.) He dooms them to utter ruin, for their own sins, and the sins of their prophets, ver. 6—8. (3.) He upbraids them with the wickedness of their fathers before them, which they trod in the steps of, ver. 9, 10. (4.) He threatens them with the destruction of their children, and the rooting out of their posterity, ver. 11—17.

1. **R**ejoyce not, O Israel, for joy, as *other people*: for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, thou hast loved a reward upon every corn-floor. 2. The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them, and the new wine shall fail in her. 3. They shall not dwell in the *L O R D s* land; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria. 4. They shall not offer wine-offerings to the *L O R D*, neither shall they be pleasing unto him: their sacrifices *shall be* unto them as the bread of mourners: all that eat thereof shall be polluted: for their bread for their soul shall not come into the house of the *L O R D*. 5. What will ye do in the solemn day, and in the day of the feast of the *L O R D*? 6. For lo, they are gone, because of destruction: Egypt shall gather them up, Memphis shall bury them: the pleasant places for their silver, nettles shall possess them: thorns *shall be* in their tabernacles.

Here, 1. The people of Israel are charged with spiritual adultery. *O Israel, thou hast gone a whoring from thy God*, ver. 1. Their covenant with God was a marriage-covenant, by which they were joined to him as *their God*, renouncing all others. But when they set up idols, and worshipped them, when they fled to creatures for succour, and put a confidence in them, they *went a whoring from God, as their God*; and honoured the pretenders and rivals with that affection, adoration, and confidence, which was due to God only. Other people were idolaters, but that sin was not in them going a whoring from God, as it was in Israel that had been married to him. Note, The sins of those who have made a profession of religion and relation to God, are more provoking to him than the sins of others. As a proof of their going a whoring from God, it is charged upon them that *they loved a reward upon every corn-floor*; (1.) They loved to give rewards to their idols, in the offerings and first-fruits they presented to them *out of every corn-floor*. They took a strange pleasure in serving their idols with that which they would have grudged to consecrate to God, and employ in his service. Note, It is common for those that are niggardly in the expences of their religion, to be very prodigal in spending upon their lusts. Or, (2.) They loved to receive rewards from their idols; and such they reckoned the fruits of the earth to be; *these are my rewards which my lovers have given me*, chap. ii. 12. Note, Those are directly disposed to spiritual idolatry, that love a reward in the corn-floor, better than a reward in the favour of God and eternal life.

2. They are forbidden to *rejoice* as other people do. *Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy.* Do not expect to rejoice; *What peace*, what joy, what hast thou to do with either, while thy whoredoms and witchcrafts are so many? 2 Kings ix. 19, 22. Be not disposed to rejoice, for it doth not become thee, but rather to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, *Jam. iv. 9.* Judah that keeps close to the true God, nay, and *other people* that never knew him, nor could ever be charged with revolting from him, may be allowed to rejoice, as not having so much cause to be ashamed, as Israel hath that has *gone a whoring* from him. Some think they had at this time particular occasions for joy, upon the account either of some losses recovered, or some advantages gained,

or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had publick rejoicings, *as other people used to have upon such occasions*; but God sends to them *not to rejoice*. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice because *they have gone a whoring from their God*, and therefore; (1.) That whatever it was which they rejoiced in, would be no security or advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God, and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have *small joy* of any of our creature-comforts, if we make not God our *chief joy*. (2.) The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy, and a strong allay to all their comforts. Note, Those that by departing from God, have made work for repentance, have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

3. They are threatened with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before, *Psal. lxxiii. 27. Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*. It is here threatened,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase; Canaan that *fruitful land* shall be *turned into barrenness*, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. They love the reward in the *corn-floor*, and are so full of the joy of harvest, that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins, and therefore God will for their effectual humiliation take away from them not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food, *ver. 2. The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them*, much less feast them: it shall either be blasted by the hand of God, or plundered by the hand of man; the *new wine* with which they used to make merry shall *fail in her*. Note, When we make the world and the things of it our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to shew us our folly and correct us for it. Let them miss of their food in the *corn-floor*, that look for their reward in the *corn-floor*. We forfeit the good things of this world, if we love them as the best things.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them, and to be a habitation for them; it shall *spue them out*, as it had done the Canaanites before them, *ver. 3. They shall not dwell any longer in the Lord's land*; the land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner *the Lord's land*, the land of the Shechinah, so the Chaldee, the *land of the Lord of the worlds*, so the Arabick, he whose all the earth is, *Psal. xxiv. 1. took that for his demesne, The land is mine*, saith God, *Lew. xxv. 23. They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly enters and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease; it is my land*, saith God, and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off, as bad tenants, and be made to know that tho' they thought themselves free-holders, they were but tenants at will. Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness, that those who go a whoring from God should not be suffered to dwell upon his land; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be *chased out of the world*. Or, it is called the Lord's land, because it was the holy land, *Immanuel's land*, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were, it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this; it was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him in such a land as this, to *deal unjustly in a land of uprightness*, *Isa. xxvi. 10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan*. Note, Those cannot expect to dwell in the Lord's land, that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That when they are turned out from the Lord's land, they shall have no rest or satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was driven out from the presence of the Lord, he was a fugitive and a vagabond ever after, and dwelt in the land of trembling. So Israel here; some shall return into Egypt, the old house of bondage, thither they shall flee from the Assyrians, *chap. viii. 13. and they shall lose and ruin themselves there where they thought to hide and help themselves*. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria, and there shall be forced to eat unclean things; either, (1.) Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrefied; intimating, that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Or, (2.) Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable, that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, yet they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that; and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, and, either through want, or for our health, are forced

to eat or drink that which is unpleasing, we must acknowledge that God is righteous, because we have sinned about our food, and have indulged ourselves too much in that which is pleasing.

4. That in the land of their enemies to which they shall be driven, they shall have no opportunity either of giving honour to God, or obtaining favour with God by offering any acceptable sacrifice to him; they should not be in a capacity of keeping up any face or shew of religion among them; "And so (as Dr Pocock expresseth it) should be as it were quite cut off from any expression of relation to him, from all signs of grace and means of reconciliation with him, which would be to them a token of their being rejected of God, estranged from him, and no more owned by him as his people." (1.) They shall have no sacrifices to offer, nor any altar to offer them on, or priests to offer them; they shall not so much as offer drink-offerings to the Lord, much less any other sacrifices. (2.) If they should offer them, neither they nor their sacrifices shall be pleasing to him, for they cannot have any legal offerings, nor are their hearts humbled. (3.) Instead of their sacrifices of joy and praise, they shall eat the bread of mourners, i. e. they shall live desolate and disconsolate, mourning for the death of their relations, and their own miseries, so that if they had opportunity of sacrificing, they should never be themselves in a frame for it; for they were forbidden to eat of the holy things in their mourning, *Deut. xxvi. 15. All that eat of the bread of mourners are polluted, and incapacitated to partake of the altar*. (4.) Their bread for their soul, the bread which they must either eat or starve, the bread that they shall have for the support of their lives, shall not come into the house of the Lord, i. e. they shall have no house of the Lord to bring it to, or if they had, it is such as is not fit to be brought, nor are they rightly disposed to bring it. (5.) The return of the days of their sacred and solemn feasts would therefore be very melancholy, and uncomfortable to them, *ver. 5. What will ye do in the solemn day, in the sabbath, the solemn day of every week, in the new moons, the solemn days of every month, at the return of the times for keeping the passover, pentecost, and feast of tabernacles, the solemn days of every year, the days of the feasts of the Lord*. Note, The feasts of the Lord are solemn days, and when we are invited to those feasts, we ought to consider seriously what we shall do. But the question is here put to those who were to be deprived of the benefit and comfort of those solemn feasts; *What will you do then?* you will then spend those days in sorrow and lamentation, which if it had not been your fault you might have been spending in joy and praise. You will then be made to know the worth of mercies by the want of them, and to prize spiritual bread by being made to feel a famine of it. Note, When we enjoy the means of grace, we ought to consider what we shall do if ever we should know the want of them; if either they should be taken from us, or we be disabled to attend upon them.

5. That they should perish in the land of their dispersion, *ver. 6. For lo they are gone out of the Lord's land, where they might have spent both their sabbath-days and other days with comfort, gone because of destruction, gone to Egypt, because of the destruction of their own country by the Assyrians, flattering themselves with hopes that they shall return when the storm is over; but those hopes also shall fail them, they shall find there are graves in Egypt, as their murmuring ancestors said, Exod. xiv. 11. Graves for them, for Egypt shall gather them up, as dead men are gathered up and carried forth to the grave, and Memphis (one of the chief cities of Egypt) shall bury them. Gathering and burying are put together, Jer. viii. 2. Job xxvii. 19. Note, Those that think presumptuously to out-run the judgments of God, are like enough to meet their deaths there, where they hoped to save their lives*.

6. That their land which they left behind, and to which they hoped to return, should become a desolation. As for their tabernacles where they formerly dwelt, and where they kept their stores, the pleasant places for their silver, they shall be demolished, and laid in ruins to that degree, that they shall be overgrown with nettles; so that if they should survive the trouble and return to their own land again, they would find it neither fruitful nor habitable, it would afford them neither food nor lodging. Note, Those that make their money their god reckon the places of their silver their pleasant places, as those that make the Lord their God reckon his tabernacles amiable, and his ordinances their pleasant things, *Isa. lxiv. 11. But while the pleasures of communion with God are out of the reach of chance and change, the pleasant places of mens silver, which were purchased with silver, or in which they deposited their silver, or which were beautified and adorned with silver, are liable to be laid in ruins, in nettles, and therewith all the pleasure men took in them*.

7. The days of visitation are come, the days of recompence are come, Israel shall know it: the prophet is a fool, the spiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine iniquity, and the great hatred. 8. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God. 9. They have deeply corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah: therefore

therefore he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins. 10. I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness: I saw your fathers as the first ripe in the fig-tree at her first time: but they went to Baal-peor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved.

For their further awakening it is here threatned,

1. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily; they shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not, it is at the door, *ver. 7. The days of visitation are come*, and there shall be no more delay, *the days of recompence are come*, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them destruction would come, and now it is come, and the time of the divine patience is expired. Note, 1. The day of God's judgment is both a *day of visitation*, in which mens sins are enquired into and brought to light, and a *day of recompence* in which mens doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompence is hastening on apace, it is sure, it is near, as if it were already come.

2. That hereby they should be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes, *Israel shall know it*, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not by instruction. *Israel shall know then what an evil and bitter thing it is to depart from God*, and what a fearful thing it is to fall into his hands; *when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see*. Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false. (1.) They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them they should have peace tho' they went on, however they pretended to be *spiritual men*, as Ahab's prophets did, 1 Kings xxii. 24. were *fools and madmen*, and not true prophets, they deceived themselves, and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, *it is for the multitude of thine iniquity*, which in contempt of the divine law thou hast persisted in, *and for the great hatred of the true prophets that reproved thee in God's name for it*. Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquity bid defiance to it, therefore God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, so strong, as that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them. (2.) They shall know then whether the *true prophets*, that were really *spiritual men*, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, *fools and madmen*, and shall be convinced they were so far from being so, that they were the *wise men* of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words fell to the ground, they knew he was established to be a prophet, 1 Sam. iii. 20. and so here when God fulfils the word of his messengers, by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought *Bedlam* the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the multitude of their iniquities of that kind, and of their great hatred, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

3. That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves should be manifested to their shame, *ver. 8. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God*, he had been formerly, they had a set of worthy good ministers that kept close to God, and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt malignant, persecuting prophets that are the ring-leaders of all mischief. Or, the *watchman of Ephraim* now pretends to have been with my God, and prefaceth his lyes with *Thus saith the Lord*, but he is a *snare of a fowler in all his ways*, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin, and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men, that he is become *hated itself in the house of his God*, or, *against the house of his God*. Note, Wicked prophets are of all other the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast they are *watchmen, speculators*, and as far as *speculation* goes they may be right, and *with my God*, may have their heads full of good notions, but look into their lives, and they are the *snare of a fowler in all their ways*, catching for themselves, and making a prey of others; look into their hearts, and they are *hated in the house of my God*; very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Wo unto thee, O land, unto thee, O church, that hast such *watchmen*, such prophets; that are *seers*, but not *doers*. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*.

4. That God would now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers which they trod in the steps of, *ver. 9, 10*.

1. They were as bad as their fathers. *They have deeply corrupted themselves*, they are rooted and riveted in sin, they are far gone in the depths of Satan, Isa. xxxi. 6. so that it is next to impossible they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out, it is as scarlet and crimson, or as the spots of the leopard,

and it is their own fault, they have corrupted themselves, have polluted, and hardened their own hearts; as in the days of Gibeah, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death, by the men of Gibeah, and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronized the villainy; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as impudent and daring now as in the days of Gibeah; and therefore what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on Gibeah; every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers sins: *He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*, the iniquity they have by kind, and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood; the sin of the fathers shall now be visited upon the children. From hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostasy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, *ver. 10*. Where observe, (1.) The great honour God put upon Israel, when he first formed them into a people. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*, i. e. he took as much delight and pleasure in them, as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them, and least expected them. Or, when they were in the wilderness he found them as grapes not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were precious in his sight and honourable, Isa. xliii. 4. he planted them a choice vine, a right seed, Jer. ii. 21. and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. *I saw them with pleasure as the first ripe in the fig-tree at the first time*, good people are compared to the good things that are first ripe, Jer. xxiv. 2. One then is worth more than many after. This speaks the delight God took in them, and in doing them good; not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully as a man doth the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard, now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency; but (2.) See the great disgrace they put upon themselves; God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghil deity, Numb. xxv. 2, 3. and they separated themselves unto that shame, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if (as should seem) the *whoredom* which the people committed with the daughters of Moab, was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God, it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. Their abominations are here said to be as they loved, i. e. their practices which were an abomination to God, were as the best beloved of their souls. Or, when they had once forsaken God, they multiplied their abominations, their idols and abominable idolatries at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers, God had done well for them, but they had carried it ungratefully towards him, and in the same manner had the present generation deeply corrupted themselves.

11. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. 12. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, wo also to them when I depart from them. 13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. 14. Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers. 16. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb. 17. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers, here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions here are which speak that. (1.) They did not hearken to God, *ver. 17*. they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod. They did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear (2.) Of the wickedness of their doings, *ver. 15*. the downright malice that was in their sins; they were not infirmities but daring presumptions. How can they but do wickedly who will

or some league made with a potent ally, for which they had publick rejoicings, as other people used to have upon such occasions; but God sends to them *not to rejoice*. Note, Joy is forbidden fruit to wicked people. They must not rejoice because they have *gone a whoring from their God*, and therefore; (1.) That whatever it was which they rejoiced in, would be no security or advantage to them, so long as they were at a distance from God, and at war with him. Note, We are likely to have *small joy* of any of our creature-comforts, if we make not God our *chief joy*. (2.) The sense of sin and dread of wrath ought to be a damp upon their joy, and a strong allay to all their comforts. Note, Those that by departing from God, have made work for repentance, have thereby marred their own mirth, till they return and make their peace with God.

3. They are threatned with destroying judgments for their spiritual whoredoms, according to what was said long before, Psal. lxxiii. 27. *Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee*. It is here threatned,

1. That their land shall not yield its wonted increase; Canaan that *fruitful land* shall be *turned into barrenness*, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein. They love the reward in the *corn-floor*, and are so full of the *joy of harvest*, that they have no disposition at all to mourn for their sins, and therefore God will for their effectual humiliation take away from them not only their delights and dainties, but even their necessary food, *ver. 2. The floor and the wine-press shall not feed them*, much less feast them: it shall either be blasted by the hand of God, or plundered by the hand of man; the *new wine* with which they used to make merry shall *fail in her*. Note, When we make the world and the things of it our idol and portion, above what they were designed for, it is just with God to deny us even support and nourishment from them, according to that which they were designed for, to shew us our folly and correct us for it. Let them miss of their *food* in the *corn-floor*, that look for their *reward* in the *corn-floor*. We forfeit the *good things* of this world, if we love them as the *best things*.

2. That their land shall not only cease to feed them, but cease to lodge them, and to be a habitation for them; it shall *spue them out*, as it had done the Canaanites before them, *ver. 3. They shall not dwell any longer in the Lord's land*; the land of Canaan was in a peculiar manner *the Lord's land*, the land of the Shechinah, so the Chaldee, the *land of the Lord of the worlds*, so the Arabick, he whose all the earth is, Psal. xxiv. 1. took that for his demesne, *The land is mine*, saith God, Lev. xxv. 23. They had used it, or abused it rather, as if it had been their own, had not paid the rent, nor done the services due to God as their landlord, and therefore God justly *enters* and takes possession of it, they having forfeited their lease; it is *my land*, saith God, and I will make it appear, for they shall be turned off, as bad tenants, and be made to know that tho' they thought themselves free-holders, they were but tenants at will. Note, It is for the honour of God's justice and holiness, that those who go a whoring from God should not be suffered to *dwell upon his land*; and therefore, sooner or later, the wicked shall be *chased out of the world*. Or, it is called the Lord's land, because it was the holy land, *Immanuel's land*, the land that had peculiar tokens of God's favour to it, and presence in it, where God was known and his name was great, where God's prophets and oracles were, it was a kind of copy of the earthly paradise, and a type of the heavenly one. It was a great privilege to have a lot in such a land as this; it was a great sin and folly to rebel against God, and go a whoring from him in such a land as this, to *deal unjustly in a land of uprightness*, Isa. xxvi. 10. And it was a sad and sore judgment to be driven out from such a land as this; it was like driving our first parents out of the garden of Eden, and almost amounted to an exclusion out of the heavenly Canaan. Note, Those cannot expect to *dwell in the Lord's land*, that will not be subject to the Lord's laws, nor be influenced by his love. Those have forfeited the privileges of the church that conform not to the rules of it.

3. That when they are turned out from the Lord's land, they shall have no rest or satisfaction in any other land. When Cain was *driven out from the presence of the Lord*, he was a *fugitive and a vagabond* ever after, and dwelt in the land of *trembling*. So Israel here; some shall *return into Egypt*, the old house of bondage, thither they shall flee from the Assyrians, *chap. viii. 13.* and they shall lose and ruin themselves there where they thought to hide and help themselves. Others shall be carried captives to Assyria, and there shall be forced to *eat unclean things*; either, (1.) Such things as were not fit for men to eat, that which is rotten and putrefied; intimating, that they shall be reduced to the utmost poverty, as the prodigal, that would fain have filled his belly with the husks. Or, (2.) Such things as were not fit for Jews to eat, being prohibited by their law. It is probable, that while they were in their own land, however disobedient in other things, yet they kept up the distinction of meats, and prided themselves in that; but since they would not keep the law of God in other things, they should not be suffered to keep it in that; and it was a just punishment of their sin in eating things offered to idols. Note, When at any time we suffer in our food, and, either through want, or for our health, are forced

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1. That the destruction spoken of shall come speedily; they shall have no reason to hope for a long reprieve, for the judgment slumbers not, it is at the door, *ver. 7. The days of visitation are come*, and there shall be no more delay, *the days of recompence are come*, which they have been so often warned to expect; their prophets have told them destruction would come, and now it is come, and the time of the divine patience is expired. Note, 1. The day of God's judgment is both a *day of visitation*, in which mens sins are enquired into and brought to light, and a *day of recompence* in which mens doom will be passed, and a reward given to every man according to his work; the strict visitation is in order to a just retribution. 2. This day of visitation and recompence is hastening on apace, it is sure, it is near, as if it were already come.

2. That hereby they should be made ashamed of their sentiments concerning their prophets. When the day of visitation comes, *Israel shall know it*, shall be made to know that by sad experience which they would not by instruction. *Israel shall know* then what an *evil and bitter thing* it is to depart from God, and what a *fearful thing* it is to fall into his hands; *when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see, but they shall see*. Israel shall know the difference between true prophets and false. (1.) They shall know then that the pretenders to prophecy, who flattered them in their sins, and rocked them asleep in their security, and told them they should have peace tho' they went on, however they pretended to be *spiritual men*, as Ahab's prophets did, *1 Kings xxii. 24. were fools and madmen*, and not true prophets, they deceived themselves, and those to whom they prophesied. But why would God suffer his people Israel to be imposed upon by those false prophets? He answers, *it is for the multitude of thine iniquity*, which in contempt of the divine law thou hast persisted in, *and for the great hatred of the true prophets that reproved thee in God's name for it*. Note, Because men receive not the love of the truth, but conceive a hatred of it, and by the multitude of their iniquity bid defiance to it, therefore God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie, so strong, as that they shall not be undeceived till the day of visitation and recompence comes, which will convince them of the folly and madness of those that seduced them, and of their own folly and madness in suffering themselves to be seduced by them. (2.) They shall know then whether the *true prophets*, that were really *spiritual men*, guided by the Spirit of God, were such as they called and counted them, *fools and madmen*, and shall be convinced they were so far from being so, that they were the *wise men* of their times, and God's faithful ambassadors to them. When Israel saw that none of Samuel's words *fell to the ground*, they knew he was *established to be a prophet*, *1 Sam. iii. 20.* and so here when God fulfils the word of his messengers, by bringing the days of recompence they foretold, then those that despised and ridiculed them, and thought *Bedlam* the fittest place for them, will be ashamed of the *multitude of their iniquities* of that kind, and of their *great hatred*, for which God brings upon them this swift destruction. Mocking the messengers of the Lord was the sin they were punished for, and so made ashamed of.

3. That hereby the wickedness of the false prophets themselves should be manifested to their shame, *ver. 8. The watchman of Ephraim was with my God*, he had been formerly, they had a set of worthy good ministers that kept close to God, and maintained communion with him; but now they have a race of corrupt malignant, persecuting prophets that are the ring-leaders of all mischief. Or, the *watchman of Ephraim* now pretends to have been *with my God*, and prefaceth his lies with *Thus saith the Lord*, but he is a *snare of a fowler in all his ways*, and is cunning to draw the simple into sin, and the upright into trouble; and he is so full of hatred and enmity to goodness and good men, that he is become *hated itself in the house of his God*, or, *against the house of his God*. Note, Wicked prophets are of all other the worst of men; their sins against God are most heinous, and their plots against religion most dangerous. They may boast they are *watchmen, speculators*, and as far as *speculation* goes they may be right, and *with my God*, may have *their heads full of good notions*, but look into *their lives*, and they are the *snare of a fowler in all their ways*, catching for themselves, and making a prey of others; look into *their hearts*, and they are *hated in the house of my God*; very malicious and spiteful against good ministers and good people. Wo unto thee, O land, unto thee, O church, that hast such *watchmen*, such prophets; that are *seers*, but not *doers*. *Corruptio optimi est pessima*.

4. That God would now reckon with them for the sins of their fathers which they trod in the steps of, *ver. 9, 10.*

1. They were as bad as their fathers. *They have deeply corrupted themselves*, they are rooted and riveted in sin, they are far gone in the depths of *Satan*, *Isa. xxxi. 6.* so that it is next to impossible they should be recovered; the stain of their corruption is deep, not to be got out, it is as *scarlet* and *crimson*, or as the *spots of the leopard*;

and it is their own fault, they have *corrupted themselves*, have polluted, and hardened their own hearts; as in the days of *Gibeah*, when the Levite's concubine was abused to death, by the men of *Gibeah*, and the whole tribe of Benjamin patronized the villainy; that was a time of deep corruption indeed, and such were the present days. Lewdness and wickedness were as *impudent* and *daring* now as in the days of *Gibeah*; and therefore what can be expected but such a vengeance as was then taken on *Gibeah*; every tribe is now as bad as the tribe of Benjamin then was, and therefore may expect to be brought as low as that tribe then was.

2. They shall therefore be reckoned with for their fathers sins: *He will remember their iniquity, and visit their sins*, the iniquity they have by kind, and by entail, the sin that runs in the blood; the *sin of the fathers* shall now be *visited upon the children*. From hence God takes occasion to upbraid them with the degeneracy and apostasy of their ancestors, their perfidiousness and base ingratitude, *ver. 10.* Where observe, (1.) The great honour God put upon Israel, when he first formed them into a people. *I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness*, i. e. he took as much delight and pleasure in them, as a poor traveller would do if he found grapes in a wilderness, where he most needed them, and least expected them. Or, when they were in the wilderness he found them as grapes not precious in themselves, but precious to him, and pleasant as the first ripe grapes to the lord of the vineyard. They were *precious in his sight and honourable*, *Isa. xliii. 4.* he planted them a *choice vine*, a *right seed*, *Jer. ii. 21.* and found them no better than he himself made them, good grapes at first. *I saw them with pleasure as the first ripe in the fig-tree at the first time*, good people are compared to the good things that are first ripe, *Jer. xxiv. 2.* One then is worth more than many after. This speaks the delight God took in them, and in doing them good; not for their sakes, but because he loved their fathers. He preserved them carefully as a man doth the first and choicest fruits of his vineyard, now when he put all this honour upon them, and they stood so fair for preferment, one would think they should have maintained their excellency; but (2.) See the great disgrace they put upon themselves; God set them apart for himself as a peculiar people, but they went to Baal-peor, joined with the Moabites in sacrificing to that dirty dunghil deity, *Numb. xxv. 2, 3.* and they separated themselves unto that shame, that shameful idol, so Baal-peor was in a particular manner, if (as should seem) the *whoredoms* which the people committed with the daughters of *Moab*, was a part of the service done to Baal-peor. Note, Whatever those separate themselves to that forsake God, it will certainly be a shame to them, first or last. Their *abominations* are here said to be as they loved, i. e. their practices which were an abomination to God, were as the best beloved of their souls. Or, when they had once forsaken God, they multiplied their *abominations*, their idols and abominable idolatries at their pleasure. This was the way of their fathers, God had done well for them, but they had carried it ungratefully towards him, and in the same manner had the present generation *deeply corrupted themselves*.

11. As for Ephraim, their glory shall fly away like a bird; from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception. 12. Though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there shall not be a man left: yea, wo also to them when I depart from them. 13. Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place: but Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer. 14. Give them, O LORD: what wilt thou give? give them a miscarrying womb, and dry breasts. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more: all their princes are revolvers. 16. Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb. 17. My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

In the foregoing verses we saw the sin of Israel derived from their fathers, here we see the punishment of Israel derived to their children; for as death entered by sin at first, so it is still entailed with it.

We may observe in these verses,

1. The sin of Ephraim. Some expressions here are which speak that. (1.) They did not *hearken to God*, *ver. 17.* they did not give attention to the voice either of his word or of his rod. They did not believe what he said, nor would they be ruled by him. He told them their duty, their interest, their danger, but they regarded him not; all he said to them by his words and by his prophets was to them as a tale that is told; and then no wonder that we hear (2.) Of the *wickedness of their doings*, *ver. 15.* the downright *malice* that was in their sins; they were not infirmities but daring presumptions. How can they but do wickedly who will not

not hearken to the word of God that would teach and persuade them to do well? And no wonder that there were *wicked doings* among them, when (3.) Their worship is corrupt, *ver. 15. All their wickedness is in Gilgal*; which was a place infamous for idolatry, as appears, *chap. iv. 15.—xii. 11. Amos iv. 4.—v. 5.* And it is probable the idolaters chose that place for their head quarters, because it had been famous, in other ages, for solemn transactions between God and Israel, as *Josh. v. 2, 10. 1 Sam. x. 8.—xi. 15.* There where the source of idolatry was, whence it spread through the kingdom, there it might be said, that *all their wickedness* was, for all other wickedness owed its original to that; corruptions in worship make way for corruptions in morals; the *mother of harlots* is the *mother of all other abominations*; *Rev. xvii. 5.* The learned Grotius conjectures that there is a mystical sense here; Golgotha in Syriac is the same with Gilgal in Hebrew, and therefore he thinks this may have reference to the putting of Christ to death at Golgotha, which was the greatest sin of the Jewish nation, and of which it might truly be said, *all their wickedness* was summed up in that. And no wonder the people did wickedly both in worship and conversation, when (4.) *All their princes were revolvers*; the whole succession of the kings of the ten tribes did evil in the sight of the Lord; or, all the set of judges and magistrates at this time were wicked; they turned aside to sinful ways, and persisted in those ways.

2. The displeasure of God against Ephraim for sin. This is variously expressed here, to shew what a provocation sin is to the pure eyes of his glory, and how odious it makes the sinner to him. (1.) *He departs from them*, *ver. 12.* When they *revolt* from him, and withdraw from their allegiance to him, how can they expect but that he should depart from them, and withdraw both his protection and his bounty? And well may his threatening be enforced as it is, and made terrible, *wo also unto them when I depart from them.* Note, Those are in a woful condition indeed whom God hath forsaken. Our *weal* or *wo* depends upon the gracious presence of God with us; and if he goes, all *weal* goes with him, and all *woes* come upon us. *God has forsaken him, persecute, and take him.* Saul knew this when he laid such an accent upon this part of his complaint, *the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me.* Nay, he doth not only depart from them, but (2.) *He hates them*; in Gilgal where *all their wickedness is, there I hated them.* There where the abominations of sin are committed, there God abominates the sinners. In Gilgal he had bestowed many tokens of his favour upon their ancestors, but now that is the place where he hates them for their base ingratitude. Nay, he not only hates them, but (3.) *He will love them no more*, will never take them into his favour again; the breach between God and Israel is wide as the sea, which cannot be healed. This agrees with what he had said, *chap. i. 6, 7. I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel*, the ten tribes. (4.) *He will discard them*, and have no more to do with them; *for the wickedness of their doings, I will drive them out of my house*, i. e. He will no longer own them as his, or as belonging to his family in the world; he will turn them out of doors as unfaithful tenants that pay him no rent, as unprofitable servants that do him neither credit nor work. Note, Those that profane God's house can expect no other but to be expelled his house, and no longer suffered to be either lodgers in it, or retainers to it. Nay, he will not only drive them out of his house, but (5.) *He will drive them far enough*, *ver. 17. My God will cast them away*, not only out of his house but out of his sight; he will quite abandon and reject them, they shall be *cast away*. God said he would *drive them out of his house*, and here the prophet seconds it, as one that knew his master's mind very well, *my God will cast them away.* See with what comfort and pleasure he calls *his God*. Note, When others discern God, and are disowned by him, it is a very great satisfaction to good people that they can call God *their God*, can cheerfully own him, and see themselves owned by him; all revolvers, all ruined, yet God is *my God*.

3. The fruit of this displeasure, in the cutting off and abandoning of their posterity, which is the judgment here threatened again and again. Observe here,

1. How numerous Ephraim was likely to be; the name Ephraim is derived from *fruitfulness*, *Gen. xli. 52.* Joseph is a *fruitful bough*, *Gen. xlix. 22.* And Moses's blessing foretold the *ten thousands of Ephraim*, *Deut. xxxiii. 17.* this was *his glory*, *ver. 11.* for this he seemed designed by him that appointeth the bounds of mens habitation, for *Ephraim, as I saw Tyrus, is planted in a pleasant place*, to encourage his increase; which one may expect as from a tree planted by the river's side. Ephraim is as strong and rich as ever Tyre was, and as proud and secure. The Chaldee paraphrase gives this sense of it, *the congregation of Israel, while they observed the law, was like to Tyrus in prosperity and security.*

2. How few Ephraim should be, *ver. 11. Their glory shall fly away like a bird*, i. e. their children shall be taken away, and the hopes of their families cut off. All their glory shall fly *as an eagle towards heaven*, swiftly and irrecoverably. Note, Worldly glory is glory that will fly away; but they that have their God their glory, have in him an unfading, everlasting glory. Ephraim has been as a fruitful tree, but now *Ephraim is smitten*, is blasted, *their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit*, *ver. 16.* If the root be dried, the branch must wither of course.

Observe, 1. God's threatening of this judgment, of the destroying of their children. (1.) They shall perish of themselves by the immediate hand of God, *ver. 11. they shall fly away, from the birth, and from the womb, and from the conception.* Some of their children shall die as soon as they are born, the cradle shall be presently turned into a coffin; others of them shall be *still-born*, or the womb shall be their grave, and their death there, their mothers death too; of others, their mothers shall miscarry almost as soon as they have conceived, and they shall be as untimely fruit. See how easily God can, and how justly we are sure he might, root out the whole race of mankind, that degenerate, guilty, obnoxious race, and blot out the name of it from under heaven, it is but doing as he doth by Ephraim here, writing them all childless, making all their glory to fly away from the *birth, the womb, and the conception*, drying up their root that they bear no fruit, and their business is done in a few years. (2.) They shall perish by the hand of their enemies; they shall die violent deaths, *ver. 12. Though they bring up their children to some maturity, tho' they escape the diseases and deaths which the infant age is liable to, and are thought to be reared past danger, yet will I bereave them*, *ver. 12.* by one judgment or other, so that *there shall not be a man left*, to build up their families, and bear up their name. Again, *ver. 13. Ephraim shall bring forth his children to the murderer*; the mothers shall travail with pain to bear their children, and a deal of care and pains, and cost bestowed upon the *nursing* of them. And when a cruel enemy comes and puts all to the sword, young and old without mercy, then they seem but as lambs that were all this while fed for the slaughter. Note, It is a great allay to the comfort parents have in their children, that they know not what they have brought them forth and brought them up for, perhaps for the murderer, or, which is worse, to be themselves the plagues of their generation. It is threatened again, *ver. 16. Though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb*, those children that they are most fond of. Note, The parents love is no security to the childrens lives; nay, sometimes death is commissioned to take the darlings of the family, and leave the burthens of it. When sentence was passed upon Israel in the wilderness, that they should all perish there, his mercy was mixed with the wrath, that their children should nevertheless enter into that rest which they through unbelief could not enter into; but this here is a total and final rejection; even their children shall all be cut off, and the land shall escheat to the crown, *ob defectum sanguinis*, shall be lost for want of heirs. The Chaldee paraphrase and many of the rabbins, by the *murderers* to which the children were brought forth, understand those that sacrificed their children to Moloch, a sin which was its own punishment, which shewed the parents void of bowels, and justly left them void of blessings. (3.) Those few that escape and remain shall be dispersed, *ver. 17. they shall be wanderers among the nations*; so the remains of the Jews are at this day, and there is no place in the world where they are a distinct nation.

2. The prophet's prayer relating to it, *ver. 14. Give them, O Lord: what shall I give? What shall I ask for a people thus doomed to destruction? it is this; since the decree is gone forth that they must either die from the womb, or be brought forth for the murderer; of the two let them rather die from the womb.* Rather let them have no children than have them to be made miserable; for the same reason when a total ruin was coming on the Jewish nation, Christ said, *Blessed is the womb that never bare, and the paps that never gave suck*, *Luke xxiii. 29.* Give therefore *a miscarrying womb and dry breasts*; for it is better to fall into the hands of the Lord, whose mercies are great, than into the hands of man. Note, Those that are childless may with this reconcile themselves to the will of God herein, that the time may come, when if they were not so, they would wish they had been so.

C H A P. X.

In this chapter, (1.) *The people of Israel are charged with gross corruptions in the worship of God, and are threatened with the destruction of their images and altars*, *ver. 1, 2, 5, 6, 8.* (2.) *They are charged with corruptions in the administration of the civil government, and are threatened with the ruin of that*, *ver. 3, 4, 7.* (3.) *They are charged with imitating the sins of their fathers, and with security in their own sins, and are threatened with smarting, humbling judgments*, *ver. 9—11.* (4.) *They are earnestly invited to repent and reform, and are threatened with ruin if they did not*, *ver. 12—15.*

1. **I** SRAEL is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit, he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images. 2. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found

found faulty: he shall break down their altars: he shall spoil their images. 3. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? 4. They have spoken words; swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field. 5. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear, because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. 6. It shall be also carried unto Assyria for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. 7. As for Samaria, her king is cut off as the scum upon the water. 8. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us.

Observe, 1. What the sins are which are here laid to Israel's charge; the national sins which bring down national judgments. The prophet deals plainly with them, for what good would it do them to be flattered?

1. They were not fruitful in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God. Here all their other wickedness began, *ver. 1. Israel is an empty vine.* The church of God is fitly compared to a vine, weak and of an unpromising outside, yet spreading and fruitful; believers are branches of that vine, and partake of its root and fatness. But this was the character of Israel, they were as an empty vine; a vine that had no sap or virtue in it, and therefore none of those good fruits produced by it that were expected from it, with which God and man should be honoured. Note, There are many who tho' they are not become degenerate vines, yet are empty vines; have no good in them. A vine is of all trees least serviceable, if it do not bear fruit. It is thenceforth good for nothing, *Ezek. xv. 3, 5.* And they that bring forth no grapes, will soon come to bring forth wild grapes, that do no good will do hurt. He is an empty vine, for he bringeth forth fruit to himself. What good there is in him is not directed to the glory of God, but he takes the praise of to himself, and prides himself in. Christians live not to themselves, *Rom. xiv. 6.* but hypocrites make self their centre; they eat and drink to themselves, *Zech. vii. 5, 6.* Or, Israel is by the judgments of God emptied and spoiled of all his wealth, because he made use of it in the service of his lusts, and not to the honour of God who gave it him. Note, What we do not rightly employ we may justly expect to be emptied of.

2. They multiplied their altars and images, and the more bountiful God's providence was to them, the more prodigal they were in serving their idols: according to the multitude of his fruit which his land brought forth, he hath increased the altars, and according to the goodness of his land, they have made goodly images. Note, It is a great affront to God, and an abuse of his goodness, when the more mercies we receive from him, the more sins we commit against him; and when the more wealth men have the more mischief they do. Should not we be thus abundant in the service of our God, as they were in the service of their idols? As we find our estates increasing, we should proportionably abound the more in works of piety and charity.

3. Their hearts were divided, *ver. 2.* (1.) They were divided among themselves; they were at variance about their idols, some for one, some for another, at variance about their kings, whose separate interests made parties in the kingdom, and in them their very hearts were divided, and alienated one from another, and there was no such thing as cordial friendship to be found among them; it follows therefore, *now shall they be found faulty.* Note, The divisions and animosities of a people are the causes of much sin, and the prefaces of ruin. (2.) They were divided between God and their idols. They had a remaining affection in their hearts for God, but a reigning affection for their idols; they wavered between God and Baal, that was the dividing of their heart. But God is the sovereign of the heart, and he will by no means endure a rival; he will either have all or none. Satan, like the pretended mother saith, *Let it be neither thine nor mine, but divide it,* but if that be yielded to, God saith, nay, *let him take all?* A heart thus divided will be found faulty, and be rejected as treacherous in its covenanting with God. Note, A heart divided between God and mammon, tho' it may trim the matter so as to appear plausible, yet in the day of discovery it will be found faulty.

4. They made no conscience of what they said, and what they did in the most solemn manner, *ver. 4.* (1.) Not of what they said in swearing, which is the most solemn speaking. They have spoken words, and words only, for they meant not as they said, they did *verba dare*, they swore falsely in making a covenant; they were deceitful in their covenanting with God, the covenant of circumcision, the fair promises they made of reformation, *No. lxxiii.*

when they were in distress; and no marvel if those that were false to their God were false to all mankind; they contracted such a habit of treachery, that they broke through the most sacred bonds and made nothing of them; subjects violated their oaths of allegiance, and their kings their coronation oaths; they broke their leagues with the nations they were in alliance with; nor was any conscience made of contracts between private persons. (2.) Nor of what they did in judgment, which is the most solemn acting; justice could not take place when men made nothing of forswearing themselves; for thus judgment which should have been a healing medicinal plant, and of a sweet smell, sprung up as hemlock, which is both nauseous and noxious in the furrows of the field, in the field that was plowed and furrowed for good corn. Note, God is greatly offended with corruptions not only in his own worship, but in the administration of justice between man and man, and the dishonesty of a people shall be the ground of his controversy with them as well as their idolatry and impiety; for God's laws are intended for man's benefit and the good of the community, as well as for God's honour. And the profanation of courts of justice shall be avenged as surely as the profanation of temples.

2. What the judgments are, with which Israel should be punished for these sins; they sinned both in civil and religious matters, and in both they shall be punished.

1. They shall have no joy of their kings, and of their government. Because justice is turned into oppression, therefore those who are intrusted with the administration of it, and should be blessings to the state, shall be complained of as the burthens of it, *ver. 3.* and they that would not rule their people well should not be able to protect them. Now they shall say, we have no king, i. e. we are as if we had none, we have none to do us any good, or stand us in any stead, none to keep us from destroying ourselves, or being destroyed by our enemies, none to preserve the publick peace, or to fight our battles; and justly is this come to us because we feared not the Lord, when we were safe under the protection of our kings; therefore we are rejected by him, and then what shall a king do for us? What good can we expect from a king, when we have forfeited the favour of our God? Note, Those that cast off the fear of God, are not likely to have joy of any of their creature-comforts; nor will mens loyalty to their prince befriend them without religion, for tho' that may engage him to be for them, what good will that do them if God be against them? Those that keep themselves in the fear and favour of God, may say with triumph, What can the greatest of men do against us? But those that throw themselves out of his protection must say with despair, What can the greatest of men do us for us? He was a king that said, *If the Lord do not help thee, whence should I help thee?* Yet he is a fool that saith, if a king cannot help us we must perish, as these intimate here, for God can do that for us which kings cannot. Time was when they doted upon having a king, but now what can a king do for them who they thought could do any thing? God can make people sick of those creature-confidences which they were most fond of. This is their complaint when their king is disabled to help them, yet this is not the worst, their civil government shall not only be weakened but quite destroyed; *ver. 7.* As for Samaria, the royal city, which is now almost all that is left, her king is cut off as the scum from the water. The scum swims uppermost, and makes a great shew upon the face of the water, yet it is but a heap of bubbles, raised by the troubling of the water; such were the kings of Israel, after their revolt from the house of David, a meer scum, their government had no foundation; no better are the greatest of kings when they set up in opposition to God; when God comes to contend with them by his judgments, he can as easily disperse and dissolve them and bring them to nothing, as the froth upon the water.

2. They shall have no joy of their idols, and of their worship of them. And miserable is the case of that people, whose gods fail them, when their kings do.

1. The idols they had made, and the altars they set up in honour of them, should be broken down and spoiled and carried away, as common plunder by the victorious enemy. He shall break down their altars, God shall do it by the hand of the Assyrian, the Assyrian shall do it by order from God, he shall spoil their images, *ver. 2.* Note, What men make idols of, it is just with God to break down and spoil. But the calf at Bethel was the sovereign idol; that was it which the inhabitants of Samaria doted most upon, now it is here foretold that that should be destroyed; The glory of it is departed from it (*ver. 5*) when it is thrown down and defaced no more to be worshipped, but that is not all, It shall also be carried to Assyria, (as some think the calf at Dan was some time before) for a present to king Jareb. It was carried to him as a rich booty, for it was a golden calf, and probably adorned with the gifts and offerings of its worshippers; and as a trophy of victory over their enemies; and what more glorious trophy could they bring than this, or more incontestable proof of an absolute conquest? Thus it is said, the sin of Israel shall be destroyed, *ver. 8.* i. e. The idols which they made the matter of their sin; it is said of them, they became a sin to all Israel, *1 Kings xii. 30.* Note, If the grace of God prevail not

to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, *the high places* shall be destroyed; the *high places of Aven*, i. e. of Bethaven, ver. 5. or Bethel; it was called *the house of God* (so Bethel signifies) but now it is called *the house of iniquity*; nay, *iniquity* itself. The kings did not as they ought to have done *take away the high places* by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war. So that *the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars*, i. e. they shall lie in ruins. Their altars while they stood were as *thorns and thistles*, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

2. The destruction of their idols, their altars, and their high places shall be the occasion of sorrow and shame and terror to them. (1.) It shall be an occasion of *sorrow* to them. When the calf at Bethel is broken, *the people thereof shall mourn over it*. They looked upon the calf to be the protector of their nation, and, when that was gone, thought they must all be undone, which made the poor ignorant people that were deluded into the love of it, take on bitterly, as Micah did, *Judg. xviii. 24. Ye have taken away my gods, and what have I more?* The priests that had rejoiced in it shall now mourn for it, with the people. Note, Whatever men make a god of, they will mourn for the loss of; and inordinate sorrow for the loss of any worldly good, is a sign we made an idol of it. They used to be very merry in the worship of their idols, but now they shall mourn over them; for sinful mirth shall sooner or later be turned into mourning. (2.) It shall be an occasion of *shame* to them, ver. 6. *Ephraim shall receive shame*, when he sees the gods he trusted to carried into captivity, and *Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel*, in putting such confidence in them, and paying such adoration to them. God's ark and altars were never thrown down till the people rejected them; but the idolatrous altars were thrown down when the people were doting on them, which shews that the contempt of the former, and the veneration for the latter, were the sins for which God visited them. (3.) It shall be an occasion of *fear* to them, ver. 5. *The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear*; they shall be in pain for their gods, and afraid of losing them; or rather, they shall be in pain for themselves, and their children and families, when they see the judgments of God breaking in upon them, and beginning with their idols, as he *executed judgment against the gods of Egypt*, *Exod. xii. 12*. Thus idolaters are brought in trembling when God ariseth to *shake terribly the earth*, *Isa. ii. 21*. And here, ver. 8. *They shall say to the mountains, cover us; and to the hills, fall on us*; the supporters of idolatry, *Rev. vi. 15, 16*. are brought in calling thus in vain to rocks and mountains to shelter them from God's wrath.

9. O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah: there they stood: the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them. 10. It is in my desire that I should chastise them: and the people shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows. 11. And Ephraim is as an heifer that is caught, and loveth to tread out the corn, but I passed over upon her fair neck: I will make Ephraim to ride: Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods. 12. Sow to your selves in righteousness, reap in mercy: break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you. 13. Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity, ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men. 14. Therefore shall a tumult arise among thy people, and all thy fortresses shall be spoiled, as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle: the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children. 15. So shall Beth-el do unto you, because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off.

Here, 1. They are put in mind of the sins of their fathers, and predecessors, for which God would now reckon with them. It was told them, *chap. ix. 9*. that they had *corrupted themselves, as in the days of Gibeah*, and here, ver. 9. *O Israel, thou hast sinned from the days of Gibeah*. Not only the wickedness that was committed in *that age*, is revived in *this*, and re-acted, a copy from that original, but the wickedness that was committed in that age hath been continued in a constant series, and succession through all the intervening ages, down to this; so that the measure of iniquity had been long in filling; and still there had been made additions to it. Or, *Thou hast sinned more than in the days of Gibeah*; so it may be read; the sins of this age exceed those of the worst of former ages. The case was bad then, for *there they stood*, the criminals stood in their own de-

fence, and the tribes of Israel who undertook to chastise them for their wickedness, were *at a stand*, when both in the first and in the second battle the malefactors were the victors; and *the battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them*, till the third engagement, and then did not overtake them all, for six hundred made their escape. But *thy sin* is worse than *theirs*, and therefore thou canst not expect but that *the battle against the children of iniquity should overtake thee*, and overcome thee.

2. They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, ver. 10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them, tho' they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience, and forbearance; but now *it is in my desire that I should chastise them*, i. e. It is what I have a purpose of, and will take pleasure in; he will *rejoice over them to do them hurt*, *Deut. xxviii. 63*. Note, Because God doth not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he doth desire their chastisement. And see what the chastisement is, *The people shall be gathered against them*; as all the other tribes were against Benjamin in the battle of Gibeah; one of the rabbins thus descants upon it, "Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them, I will chastise them by the hands of the people, which shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows;" i. e. when they shall think to fortify themselves as it were within a double entrenchment. Or, *When I shall bind them for their two transgressions*, so the margin reads it, meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they are so often charged with, or the two calves at Dan and Bethel; or those two great evils mentioned, *Jer. ii. 13*. Or, *When I shall bind them to their two furrows*, i. e. bring them into servitude to the Assyrians, who shall keep them under the yoke, as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows up the field, and down it, and dare not for fear of the goad stir a step out of them. The Chaldee faith, *Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows*. Thus they that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between *God's service*, and *the service of the kingdoms of the countries*, *2 Chron. xii. 8*.

3. They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, ver. 11. See how nice and tender and delicate Ephraim is, he is *as an heifer that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work*, because being not to be muzzled she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion, and its own wages. But, faith God, I have a yoke to put upon her *fair neck*, as fair as it is, *I will make Ephraim to ride*, i. e. I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the Assyrians and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon, *Psal. lvi. 12*. and Judah too shall be made to *plow*, and Jacob to *break the clods*, i. e. they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as Ephraim. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardship means, that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned Dr Pocock inclines to another sense of these words, as speaking the tender gentle methods God took with this people to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience; he had managed them as the husbandman doth his cattle that he trains up for service; Ephraim being as a docible heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of *her fair neck*, to accustom her to the hand; *harnessed her*, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her, gave his people Israel a law, that being trained up in his institutions, they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen; he had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, had set Judah to *plow*, and Jacob to *break the clods*, and employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them, and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

4. They are invited and encouraged to return to God, by prayer, repentance, and reformation, ver. 12, 13. See here,

1. The duties they are called to. They are *God's husbandry*, *1 Cor. iii. 9*. and the duties are expressed in language, borrowed from the husbandman's calling; if they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service. (1.) Let them *break up the fallow ground*; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as *weeds and thorns*, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them, let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is plowed is to receive the seed, that it may *take root*. See *Jer. iv. 4*. (2.) Let them *sow to themselves in righteousness*, i. e. let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of *righteousness*; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them *sow to the Spirit*, as the apostle speaks, *Gal. vi. 7, 8*. Every action is seed sown, let them *sow in righteousness*, i. e. let them sow what they should sow, do what they should

do, and they *themselves* shall have the benefit of it. (3.) Let them *seek the Lord*, i. e. let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the *seed sown*. The husbandman must plow and sow with an eye to God, asking of him *rain in the season thereof*.

2. The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider (1.) *It is time to do it*; it is *high time*; the husbandman sows in seed-time, and if that time be far spent, he applies himself to it with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God, when it is in a particular manner time to seek him. (2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we *sow to ourselves in righteousness*, i. e. if we be careful and diligent to do our duty in a dependence upon his grace, he will shower down his grace upon us, will *rain righteousness*, the very thing that they need most who are to sow in *righteousness*; for *by the grace of God we are what we are*. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time; and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as *the Lord our righteousness*, and shall *rain righteousness upon us*, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold, *Psal. lxxii. 6. that he shall come down like rain*. (3.) If we *sow in righteousness we shall reap in mercy*; which agrees with that promise, If we *sow to the Spirit*, we shall *of the Spirit reap life everlasting*. We shall reap according to the *measure of mercy*, so the word is, it shall be a great reward, according to the *riches of mercy*; such a reward not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward *not of debt, but of grace*. We reap not in merit, but in mercy. It is what is *sown*, God giveth a body as it has pleased him. (4.) We have *plowed wickedness, and reaped iniquity*, and the time *past of our life may suffice* that we have done so, *ver. 13*. You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire, and will you grudge to bear the burthen and heat of the day in God's service, and in doing that which will be for your own advantage. You have done much to damn your souls, will you not undo it again, and do something to save them? (5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have *plowed wickedness*, i. e. they have done the drudgery of sin, and they have *reaped iniquity*, i. e. they have got all that is to be got by it, they have carried it on to the *harvest*, and what the better? it is all a cheat, *they have eaten the fruit of lies*, i. e. Fruit that is but a lye, which looks fair but is rotten within; the *works of darkness* are *unfruitful works*, *Eph. v. 11. Rom. vi. 21*. Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. (6.) As our comforts so our confidences in the service of sin will certainly fail us. *Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men*, i. e. Thou hast staid thyself, upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plow wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come therefore and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee.

5. They are threatened with utter destruction both for their carnal practices, and for their carnal confidences, *ver. 14, 15*. Therefore because thou hast sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, *a tumult shall arise among thy people*; either by insurrections at home, or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion, and make a noise, much more both together. (1.) Their cities and strong holds shall be a prey to the enemy; the *fortresses* which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their effects, shall be seized and rifled, *as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle*. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house, (*Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel*) under military execution; which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons; God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled. (2.) The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel, when it was taken, *the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children*, i. e. they were both dashed in pieces together, by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes; *Jusque datum sceleri*. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman, but see what comes of sin; *Homo homini lupus* and then *homo homini agnus*. (3.) Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore, *in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off*, *ver. 15*. Hoheza was the last king of Israel, in him the whole kingdom was cut off, and came to a period, it may refer either to him, or to some of his predecessors, that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done *in a morning* in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning. Or, at the time appointed, for so the morning comes, punctually at its time. Or, *in the morning*, when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed, by the sudden cutting off of their king, *ver. 7*. Kings though gods to us are men to God, and shall die like men. And, (lastly) what doth all this desolation owe its rise too? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us, *ver. 15. So shall Bethel do unto you*; Bethel was the place where one of the calves was, Gilgal, where *all their wickedness* is said to have been, was *hard by*; there was their *great wickedness*,

the *evil of their evil*, so the word is; the sum and quintessence of their sin; and that was it that *did this to them*, that made all this havock, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He doth not say, so shall the king of Assyria do to you, but so shall Bethel do to you. Note, Whatever mischief is done to us, it is sin that doth it. Are the fortresses spoiled? Are the women and children murdered? Is the king cut off? It is sin that doth all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all; *So shall Bethel do unto you*. It is *thy own wickedness* that *corrects thee*, and *thy backslidings* that *reprove thee*.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have (1.) The great goodness of God towards his people Israel, and the great things he had done for them, *ver. 1, 3, 4*. (2.) Their ungrateful carriage towards him notwithstanding his favours towards them, *ver. 2, 3, 4, 7, 12*. (3.) Threatnings of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery, *ver. 5, 6*. (4.) Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath, *ver. 8, 9*. (5.) Promises of what God would yet do for them, *ver. 10, 11*. (6.) An honourable character given of Judah, *ver. 12*.

1. **W**HEN Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. 5. ¶ He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. 6. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. 7. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

Here we find,

1. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more; which they are here, I will not say upbraided with (for God gives and upbraids not) but put in mind of as an aggravation of their sin, and an encouragement to repentance.

(1.) He had a kindness for them when they were young, *ver. 1. When Israel was a child, then I loved him*; when they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt, God then *set his love upon them*, and *chose them*, because he loved them, because he would love them, *Deut. vii. 7, 8*. When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God *loved them*, i. e. he pitied them, and testified his good will to them, he bore them as the nurse doth the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their manners. Note, Those that are grown up, nay, those that are grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

(2.) He delivered them out of the house of bondage; *I called my son out of Egypt*, because a son, because a beloved son; when God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh, he called them *his son*, his *first born*. Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when upon the death of Herod he and his parents were *called out of Egypt*, *Mat. ii. 15*. so that the words have a double aspect, speaking *historically* of the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and *prophetically* of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel, when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his through him out of spiritual slavery.

(3.) He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother or nurse, *ver. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go*, as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness, God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, shewed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, *taking them by the arms*; he taught them to go in the way of

to destroy the love of sin in us, it is just that the providence of God should destroy the food and fuel of sin about us. With the idols, *the high places* shall be destroyed; *the high places of Aven*, i. e. of *Bethaven*, ver. 5. or *Bethel*; it was called *the house of God* (so *Bethel* signifies) but now it is called *the house of iniquity*; nay, *iniquity* itself. The kings did not as they ought to have done *take away the high places* by the sword of justice, and therefore God will take them away by the sword of war. So that *the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars*, i. e. they shall lie in ruins. Their altars while they stood were as *thorns and thistles*, offensive to God and good men, and fruits of sin and the curse; justly therefore are they buried in thorns and thistles.

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2. They have warning given them, fair warning, of the judgments of God that were coming upon them, ver. 10. God had hitherto pitied and spared them, tho' they had been very provoking, he had a mind to try whether they would be wrought upon by patience, and forbearance, but now *it is in my desire that I should chastise them*, i. e. It is what I have a purpose of, and will take pleasure in; he will *rejoice over them to do them hurt*, *Deut. xxviii. 63*. Note, Because God doth not desire the death and ruin of sinners, therefore he doth desire their chastisement. And see what the chastisement is, *The people shall be gathered against them*; as all the other tribes were against *Benjamin* in the battle of *Gibeah*; one of the rabbins thus descants upon it, "Because they receive not chastisement from me by my prophets, who in my name rebuke them, I will chastise them by the hands of the people, which shall be gathered against them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows;" i. e. when they shall think to fortify themselves as it were within a double entrenchment. Or, *When I shall bind them for their two transgressions*, so the margin reads it, meaning their corporal and spiritual whoredom, which they are so often charged with, or the two calves at *Dan* and *Bethel*; or those two great evils mentioned, *Jer. ii. 13*. Or, *When I shall bind them to their two furrows*, i. e. bring them into servitude to the *Assyrians*, who shall keep them under the yoke, as oxen in the plough, who are bound to the two furrows up the field, and down it, and dare not for fear of the goad stir a step out of them. The *Chaldee* faith, *Those that are gathered against them shall exercise dominion over them, in like manner as a pair of heifers are tied to their two furrows*. Thus they that would not be God's freemen shall be their enemies slaves, and shall be made to know the difference between *God's service*, and *the service of the kingdoms of the countries*, *2 Chron. xii. 8*.

3. They are made to know that their unacquaintedness with sufferings and hardships should not excuse them from a very miserable captivity, ver. 11. See how nice and tender and delicate *Ephraim* is, he is *as an heifer that is taught to tread out the corn, and loves that work*, because being not to be muzzled she has liberty to eat at pleasure, and the work itself was dry and easy, and both its own diversion, and its own wages. But, faith God, I have a yoke to put upon her *fair neck*, as fair as it is, I will make *Ephraim to ride*, i. e. I will tame them, or cause them to be ridden by the *Assyrians* and other conquerors that shall rule them with rigour, as men do the beasts they ride upon, *Psal. lxvi. 12*. and *Judah* too shall be made to plow, and *Jacob to break the clods*, i. e. they shall be used hardly, but not so hardly as *Ephraim*. Note, It is just with God to make those know what hardship means, that indulge themselves too much in their own ease and pleasure. The learned *Dr Pocock* inclines to another sense of these words, as speaking the tender gentle methods God took with this people to bring them into obedience to his law, as a reason why they should return to that obedience; he had managed them as the husbandman doth his cattle that he trains up for service; *Ephraim* being as a docible heifer, fit to be employed, God took hold of her *fair neck*, to accustom her to the hand; *harnessed her*, or put the yoke of his commandments upon her, gave his people *Israel* a law, that being trained up in his institutions, they might not be tempted by the usages of the heathen; he had used all fair and likely means with them to keep them in their obedience, had set *Judah to plow*, and *Jacob to break the clods*, and employed them in the observance of precepts proper for them, and yet they would not be retained in their obedience, but started aside.

4. They are invited and encouraged to return to God, by prayer, repentance, and reformation, ver. 12, 13. See here,

1. The duties they are called to. They are *God's husbandry*, *1 Cor. iii. 9.* and the duties are expressed in language, borrowed from the husbandman's calling; if they would not be brought into bondage by their oppressors, let them return to God's service. (1.) Let them *break up the fallow ground*; let them cleanse their hearts from all corrupt affections and lusts, which are as *weeds and thorns*, and let them be humbled for their sins, and be of a broken and contrite spirit in the sense of them, let them be full of sorrow and shame at the remembrance of them, and prepare to receive the divine precepts, as the ground that is plowed is to receive the seed, that it may take root. See *Jer. iv. 4.* (2.) Let them *sow to themselves in righteousness*, i. e. let them return to the practice of good works, according to the law of God, which is the rule of *righteousness*; let them abound in works of piety towards God, and of justice and charity towards one another, and herein let them *sow to the Spirit*, as the apostle speaks, *Gal. vi. 7, 8*. Every action is seed sown, let them *sow in righteousness*, i. e. let them sow what they should sow, do what they should

do, and they *themselves* shall have the benefit of it. (3.) Let them seek the Lord, *i. e.* let them look up to him for his grace, and beg of him to bless the seed sown. The husbandman must plow and sow with an eye to God, asking of him rain in the season thereof.

2. The arguments used for the pressing of these duties. Consider (1.) *It is time* to do it; it is *high time*; the husbandman sows in seed-time, and if that time be far spent, he applies himself to it with the more diligence. Note, Seeking the Lord is to be every day's work, but there are some special occasions given by the providence and grace of God, when it is in a particular manner time to seek him. (2.) If we do our part, God will do his. If we *sow to ourselves in righteousness, i. e.* if we be careful and diligent to do our duty in a dependence upon his grace, he will shower down his grace upon us, will *rain righteousness*, the very thing that they need most who are to sow in righteousness; for *by the grace of God we are what we are*. Some apply it to Christ, who should come in the fulness of time; and for whose coming they must prepare themselves; he shall come as *the Lord our righteousness*, and shall *rain righteousness upon us*, that everlasting righteousness which he has brought in, he will grant us of it abundantly. It is foretold, *Psal. lxxii. 6.* that *he shall come down like rain*. (3.) If we *sow in righteousness we shall reap in mercy*; which agrees with that promise, If we *sow to the Spirit*, we shall of the Spirit *reap life everlasting*. We shall reap according to the measure of mercy, so the word is, it shall be a great reward, according to the riches of mercy; such a reward not as becomes such mean creatures as we are to receive, but as becomes a God of infinite mercy to give, a reward *not of debt, but of grace*. We reap not in merit, but in mercy. It is what is sown, God giveth a body as it has pleased him. (4.) We have *plowed wickedness, and reaped iniquity*, and the time *past of our life may suffice* that we have done so, *ver. 13.* You have taken a great deal of pains in the service of sin, have laboured at it in the very fire, and will you grudge to bear the burthen and heat of the day in God's service, and in doing that which will be for your own advantage. You have done much to damn your souls, will you not undo it again, and do something to save them? (5.) We never got any thing in the service of sin. They have *plowed wickedness, i. e.* they have done the drudgery of sin, and they have *reaped iniquity, i. e.* they have got all that is to be got by it, they have carried it on to the *harvest*, and what the better? it is all a cheat, *they have eaten the fruit of lyes, i. e.* Fruit that is but a lye, which looks fair but is rotten within; the *works of darkness* are *unfruitful works*, *Eph. v. 11. Rom. vi. 21.* Even the gains of sin yield the sinner no satisfaction. (6.) As our comforts for our confidences in the service of sin will certainly fail us. *Thou didst trust in thy ways, in the multitude of thy mighty men, i. e.* Thou hast staid thyself, upon creatures, thy own power and policy, and therefore hast ventured to plow wickedness, and thy hopes have deceived thee; come therefore and seek the Lord, and thy hope in him shall not deceive thee.

5. They are threatened with utter destruction both for their carnal practices, and for their carnal confidences, *ver. 14, 15.* Therefore because thou hast sown wickedness, and trusted in thy own way, *a tumult shall arise among thy people*; either by insurrections at home, or invasions from abroad, either of which will put a kingdom into confusion, and make a noise, much more both together. (1.) Their cities and strong holds shall be a prey to the enemy; the *fortresses* which they confided in, and in which they had laid up their effects, shall be seized and rifled, *as Shalman spoiled Beth-arbel in the day of battle*. This refers to some event that had lately happened, not elsewhere recorded; and probably Shalman is the same with Shalmaneser king of Assyria, who had lately put some town, or castle, or house, (*Beth-arbel is the house of Arbel*) under military execution; which perhaps he used with severity in the beginning of his conquests, to terrify other garrisons into a speedy surrender at the first summons; God tells them that thus Samaria should be spoiled. (2.) The inhabitants shall be put to the sword, as it was at Beth-arbel, when it was taken, *the mother was dashed in pieces upon her children, i. e.* they were both dashed in pieces together, by the fury of the soldiers. See what cruel work war makes; *Jusque datum sceleri*. It is strange that any of the human race could be so inhuman, but see what comes of sin; *Homo homini lupus* and then *homo homini agnus*. (3.) Even royal blood shall be mingled with common gore, *in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off, ver. 15.* Hoshea was the last king of Israel, in him the whole kingdom was cut off, and came to a period, it may refer either to him, or to some of his predecessors, that were cut off by treachery. It shall be done *in a morning* in a very little time, as suddenly as the dawning of the morning. Or, at the time appointed, for so the morning comes, punctually at its time. Or, *in the morning*, when they think the night of calamity is over, and expect a returning day, then shall all their hopes be dashed, by the sudden cutting off of their king, *ver. 7.* Kings though gods to us are men to God, and shall die like men. And, (lastly) what doth all this desolation owe its rise too? What is the spring of this bloodshed? He tells us, *ver. 15.* *So shall Bethel do unto you*; Bethel was the place where one of the calves was, Gilgal, where *all their wickedness* is said to have been, was *hard by*; there was their great wickedness,

the evil of their evil, so the word is; the sum and quintessence of their sin; and that was it that *did this to them*, that made all this havock, for that was it that provoked God to bring it upon them. He doth not say, so shall the king of Assyria do to you, but so shall Bethel do to you. Note, Whatever mischief is done to us, it is sin that doth it. Are the fortresses spoiled? Are the women and children murdered? Is the king cut off? It is sin that doth all this. It is sin that ruins soul, body, estate, all; *So shall Bethel do unto you*. It is *thy own wickedness* that corrects thee, and *thy backslidings* that reprove thee.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have (1.) The great goodness of God towards his people Israel, and the great things he had done for them, *ver. 1, 3, 4.* (2.) Their ungrateful carriage towards him notwithstanding his favours towards them, *ver. 2, 3, 4, 7, 12.* (3.) Threatnings of wrath against them for their ingratitude and treachery, *ver. 5, 6.* (4.) Mercy remembered in the midst of wrath, *ver. 8, 9.* (5.) Promises of what God would yet do for them, *ver. 10, 11.* (6.) An honourable character given of Judah, *ver. 12.*

1. **W**HEN Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. 2. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images. 3. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms, but they knew not that I healed them. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love, and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. 5. ¶ He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. 6. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels. 7. And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

Here we find,

1. God very gracious to Israel. They were a people for whom he had done more than for any people under heaven, and to whom he had given more; which they are here, I will not say upbraided with (for God gives and upbraids not) but put in mind of as an aggravation of their sin, and an encouragement to repentance.

(1.) He had a kindness for them when they were young, *ver. 1.* *When Israel was a child, then I loved him*; when they first began to multiply into a nation in Egypt, God then *set his love upon them*, and *chose them*, because he loved them, because he would love them, *Deut. vii. 7, 8.* When they were weak and helpless as children, foolish and froward as children, when they were outcasts, and children exposed, then God *loved them, i. e.* he pitied them, and testified his good will to them, he bore them as the nurse doth the sucking child, nourished them, and suffered their manners. Note, Those that are grown up, nay, those that are grown old, ought often to reflect upon the goodness of God to them in their childhood.

(2.) He delivered them out of the house of bondage; *I called my son out of Egypt*, because a son, because a beloved son; when God demanded Israel's discharge from Pharaoh, he called them *his son, his first born*. Note, Those whom God loves he calls out of the bondage of sin and Satan into the glorious liberty of his children. These words are said to have been fulfilled in Christ, when upon the death of Herod he and his parents were called out of Egypt, *Mat. ii. 15.* so that the words have a double aspect, speaking *historically* of the calling of Israel out of Egypt, and *prophetically* of the bringing of Christ thence; and the former was a type of the latter, and a pledge and earnest of the many and great favours God had in reserve for that people, especially the sending of his Son into the world, and the bringing him again into the land of Israel, when they had unkindly driven him out, and he might justly never have returned. The calling of Christ out of Egypt was a figure of the calling of all that are his through him out of spiritual slavery.

(3.) He gave them a good education, took care of them, took pains with them, not only as a father or tutor, but such is the condescension of divine grace, as a mother or nurse, *ver. 3.* *I taught Ephraim also to go*, as a child in leading-strings is taught. When they were in the wilderness, God led them by the pillar of cloud and fire, shewed them the way in which they should go, and bore them up, *taking them by the arms*; he taught them to go in the way of

of his commandments, by the institutions of the ceremonial law, which were as tutors and governors to that people under age. He took them by the arms to guide them that they might not stray, and to hold them up that they might not stumble and fall. God's spiritual Israel are thus supported, *thou hast holden me by my right hand*, Psal. lxxiii. 23.

(4.) When any thing was amiss with them, or they were never so little out of order, he was their physician. *I healed them*. Not only took a tender care of them, a friend may do that, but wrought an effectual cure, it is a God only that can do that; *I am the Lord that healeth thee*, Exod. xv. 26. that redress all thy grievances.

(5.) He brought them into his service by mild and gentle methods, *ver. 4. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love*. Note, It is God's work to draw poor souls to himself; and none can come to him except he draw them, *Job. vi. 44*. He draws (1.) *With the cords of a man*, with such cords as men draw with that have a principle of humanity; or such cords as men are drawn with; he dealt with them *as men*, in an equitable, rational way, in an easy gentle way, *with the cords of Adam*. He dealt with them as with Adam in innocency, bringing them at once into a paradise, and into covenant with himself. (2.) *With bands of love*; or, *cart-ropes* of love; this word signifies *stronger* cords than the former. He did not drive them by force into his service, whether they would or no, nor rule them with rigour, or detain them by violence, but his attractives were all loving and endearing, all sweet and gentle, that he might *overcome* them with kindness. Moses, whom he made their guide, was the *meekest* man in the world. *Kindnesses* among men we commonly call *obligations*, or *bonds*; bonds of love. Thus God *draws with the savour of his good ointments*, Cant. i. 4. *draws with loving kindness*, Jer. xxxi. 3. Thus God deals with us, and we must deal in like manner with those that are under our instruction and government, deal *rationaly*, and deal *mildly* with them.

(6.) He eased them of the burthens they had been long groaning under. *I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws*, alluding to the care of the good husbandman that is merciful to his beast, and will not tire him with hard and constant labour. Probably in those times the yoke on the neck of the oxen was fastened with some bridle or headstall over the jaws, which *muzzled the mouth of the ox*; Israel in Egypt was thus *restrained* from the enjoyments of their comforts, and *constrained* to hard labour, but God eased them, *removed their shoulder from the burthen*, Psal. lxxxii. 6. Note, Liberty is a great mercy, especially *out of bondage*.

(7.) He supplied them with food convenient; in Egypt they fared hard, but when God brought them out, he *laid meat unto them*, as the husbandman when he has unyoked his cattle fodders them. God rained *manna* about their camp, bread from heaven, angels food; other creatures *seek their meat*, but God *laid meat* to his own people, as we do to our children; was himself their caterer and carver; *prevented them with the blessings of goodness*.

2. Here is Israel very *ungrateful* to God;

1. They were deaf and disobedient to his voice; he spake to them by his messengers, Moses, and his other prophets, called them from their sins, called them to himself, to their work and duty, but *as they called them, so they went from them*; they rebelled in those particular instances wherein they were admonished; the more pressing and importunate the prophets were with them, to persuade them to that which was good, the more refractory they were, and the more resolute in their evil ways; disobeying, for disobedience fake. This foolishness is bound in the hearts of children, who, as soon as they are *taught to go*, will go from those that call them.

2. They were fond of idols and worshipped them; they *sacrificed to Baalim*, first one Baal, and then another, and *burnt incense to graven images*, tho' they were called to by the prophets of the Lord again and again, not to do this abominable thing which he hated. Idolatry was the sin which from the beginning, and all along, had most easily beset them.

3. They were regardless of God, and of his favours to them. *They knew not that I healed them*. They looked only at Moses and Aaron the instruments of their relief, and when any thing was amiss quarrelled with them, but looked not thro' them to God who employed them. Or, when God corrected them and kept them under a severe discipline, they understood not that it was for their good, and that God thereby *healed them*; and it was necessary for the perfecting of their cure, else they would have been better reconciled to the methods God took. Note, Ignorance is at the bottom of ingratitude, *chap. ii. 8*.

4. They were strongly inclined to apostasy. This is the blackest article in the charge, *ver. 7. My people are bent to backsliding from me*. Every word here is aggravating. (1.) *They backslide*. There is no hold of them, no steadfastness in them; they seem to come forwards towards God, but presently they slide back again, and are as a deceitful bow. (2.) *They backslide from me*, from God, the chief good, the fountain of life and living waters: from their God, their owner, ruler, and benefactor; *from God* who never turned from them, nor was as a wilderness to them. (3.) They are *bent to backslide*; they are *ready to sin*, there is in their natures a propensity to that which is evil; at the best they *hang in suspense* between God and the world, so that a little thing serves to draw them the wrong way; they are forward to close

with every temptation. It also intimates, that they are *resolute* in sin, their hearts are fully *set in them to do evil*; the bias is strong that way; and they persist in their backslidings, whatever is said or done to stop them; and yet, (4.) They are in profession *my people*; they are *called by my name*, and profess relation to me; they are *mine* whom I have done much for, and expect much from, whom I have *nourished*, and *brought up as children*, and yet they *backslide from me*. Note, In our repentance we ought to lament not only our backslidings, but our *bent to backslide*; not only our actual transgressions, but our original corruption. The sin that dwells in us, the carnal mind.

5. They were strangely averse to repentance and reformatiions. Here are two expressions for that, (1.) *They refused to return*, *ver. 5*. so much were they bent to *backslide*; that tho' they could not but find upon trial the folly of their backslidings, and that when they forsook God they changed for the worse, yet they went on forwardly, *I have loved strangers, and after them I will go*. They were *commanded* to return, were *courted* and *intreated* to return, were promised that if they would they should be kindly received, but they *refused*. (2.) Tho' they called them to the *most High*, God's prophets and ministers called them to return to the God from whom they had revolted, to the *most High* God, from whom they had *junk* into this wretched degeneracy; they called them from the worship of the idols that were so much *below them*, and the worship of whom was therefore their disparagement, to the true God, that was so much *above them*, and the worship of whom was therefore their preferment; they called them from this earth, to high and heavenly things; but they called in vain, *none at all would exalt him*. Tho' he be the *most High* God, they would not acknowledge him to be so; would do nothing to honour him, nor give him the glory due to his name. Or, they would not *exalt themselves*, would not rise out of that state of apostasy and misery into which they had precipitated themselves; but there they contentedly lay still, would not lift up their heads, nor lift up their souls. Note, God's faithful ministers have taken a great deal of pains to no purpose with backsliding children, have called them to the most High, but none would stir, *none at all would exalt him*.

3. Here is God very angry, and justly so with Israel; see what are the tokens of God's displeasure with which they are here threatened.

1. God that brought them out of Egypt to take them for a people to himself, since they would not be faithful to him, shall bring them into a worse condition than he at first found them in, *ver. 5. He shall not return into the land of Egypt*, tho' that was a house of bondage grievous enough, but he shall go into a harder service, for *the Assyrian shall be his king*, who will use them worse than ever Pharaoh did. They shall not *return into Egypt*, which lies near, where they may hear oft from their own country, and whence they may hope shortly to return to it again; but they shall be carried into Assyria, that lies much more remote; and where they shall be cut off from all correspondence with their own land, and from all hopes of returning to it, and justly, because they *refused to return*. Note, Those that will not return to the duties they have left, cannot expect to return to the comforts they have lost.

2. God that gave them Canaan, that good land, and a very safe and comfortable settlement in it, shall bring his judgments upon them there, which shall make their habitation unsafe and uncomfortable, *ver. 6. the sword shall come upon him, the sword of war, the sword of a foreign enemy, prevailing against them, and triumphing over them*. (1.) This judgment shall *spread far*, the sword shall fasten upon *his cities*, those nests of people and store-houses of wealth; it shall likewise reach to *his branches*, the country villages, so some, the citizens themselves, so others, or the *bars* (so the word signifies) and gates of their city; or, all the *branches* of their revenue and wealth; or their children the branches of their families. (2.) It shall *last long*. It shall *abide on their cities*. David thought *three months* flying before his enemies, was the only judgment of the three that was to be excepted against; but this *sword* here shall abide much longer than so on the cities of Israel. They continued their rebellions against God, and therefore God continued his judgments on them. (3.) It shall *make a full end*; it shall *consume his branches, and devour them*, and lay all waste, and this *because of their own counsels*, i. e. because they would have their own way, both in worship and conversation, would do as they list, and pursue their own projects, which God therefore in a way of righteous judgment gave them up to. Note, The confusion of sinners is owing to their contrivance. God's counsels would have saved them, but their own counsels ruin them.

8. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. 9. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man, the holy One in the midst of thee, and I will not enter into the city. 10. They shall walk after the LORD: he shall rore like a lion: when

when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west. 11. They shall tremble as a bird out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria: and I will place them in their houses, saith the LORD. 12. Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.

In these verses we have,

1. God's wonderful *backwardness* to destroy Israel, *ver.* 8, 9. *How shall I give thee up?* Here observe, (1.) God's gracious debate within himself concerning Israel's case, a debate between justice and mercy, in which victory plainly inclines to mercy's side. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and wonder, O earth, at the glory of God's goodness. Not that there are any such struggles in God as there are in us, or that he is ever fluctuating or unresolved; no, he is in one mind, and knows it; but they are expressions after the manner of men, designed to shew what severity the sin of Israel had deserved, and yet how divine grace would be glorified in sparing them notwithstanding. The connexion of this with what goes before is very surprising; it was said of Israel, *ver.* 7. that they were *bent to backslide from God*, that tho' they were called to him, yet they *would not exalt him*, upon which one would think it should have followed, Now I am determined to destroy them, and never shew them mercy more; no, such is the sovereignty of mercy, such the freeness, the fulness of divine grace, that it follows immediately, *How shall I give thee up?* See here, (1.) The proposals that justice makes concerning Israel, the suggestion of which is here implied; let Ephraim be *given up*, as an incorrigible son is given up to be disinherited, as an incurable patient is given over by his physician. Let him be *given up* to ruin, let Israel be *delivered* into the enemy's hand, as a lamb to the lion to be torn in pieces; let them be made as Admah, and set as Zeboim, the two cities that with Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire and brimstone, rained from heaven upon them; let them be utterly and irreparably ruined, and be made as like these cities in desolation, as they have been in sin. Let that curse which is written in the law be executed upon them, that the *whole land* shall be *brimstone and salt, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim*, Deut. xxix. 23. Ephraim and Israel deserve to be thus abandoned, and God doth them no wrong if he deal thus with them. (2.) The opposition that mercy makes to these proposals. *How shall I do it?* As the tender father reasons with himself, how can I cast off my untoward son? For he is my son tho' he be untoward; how can I find in my heart to do it? Thus Ephraim has been a dear son, a pleasant child, *How can I do it?* He is ripe for ruin, judgments stand ready to seize him, there wants nothing but *giving him up*, but I cannot do it. They have been a people near unto me, there are yet some good among them, theirs are the children of the covenant, if they be ruined the enemy will triumph; it may be they will yet repent and reform, and therefore how can I do it? Note, The God of heaven is slow to anger, and is especially loth to abandon a people to utter ruin that has been in special relation to him. See how mercy works upon the mention of those severe proceedings; *my heart is turned within me*, as we say, our heart *fails us*, when we come to do a thing that is against the grain with us; God speaks as if he were conscious to himself of a strange striving of affections in compassion to Israel, as Lam. i. 20. *My bowels are troubled, my heart is turned within me*. As it follows here, *my repentings are kindled together*, i. e. his bowels yearned towards them, and his soul was grieved for their sin and misery, Judg. x. 16. compare Jer. xxxi. 20. *Since I spake against him my bowels are troubled for him*. When God was to give up his Son to be a sacrifice for sin, and a Saviour for sinners, he did not say, *How shall I give him up?* No, he *spared not his own Son*; it *pleased the Lord to bruise him*; and therefore God spared not him that he might spare us: But this is only the language of the day of his patience, but when men have sinned that away, and the great day of his wrath comes, then no difficulty is made of it, nay, *I will laugh at their calamity*.

(2.) His gracious *determination* of this debate. After a long contest, mercy in the issue rejoiceth against judgment, has the last word, and carries the day, *ver.* 9. It is decreed, the reprieve shall be lengthened out yet longer, and *I will not now execute the fierceness of mine anger*, tho' I am angry; tho' they shall not go altogether unpunished yet he will mitigate the sentence, and abate the rigour of it. He will shew himself to be *justly* angry, but not *implacably* so; they shall be corrected, but not consumed. *I will not return to destroy Ephraim*, i. e. the judgments that have been inflicted shall not be repeated, shall not go so deep as they have deserved. He will not *return to destroy*, as soldiers when they have pillaged a town once, return a second time to take more, as when *what the palmer-worm has left the locust has eaten*. It is added in the close of the verse, *I will not enter into the city, into Samaria, or any other of their cities*; I will not enter into them as an enemy, utterly to destroy them, and lay them waste, as Admah and Zeboim were.

(3.) The ground and reason of this determination; *for I am God, and not man, the holy One of Israel*. To encourage them to hope that they shall find mercy, consider, (1.) What he is in him-

self; *he is God, and not man*, as in other things, so in pardoning sin and sparing sinners; if they had offended a man like themselves, he would not, he could not have born it, his passion would have overpowered his compassion, and he would have executed the fierceness of his anger; but *I am God, and not man*; he is *Lord of his anger*, whereas men's anger commonly lords it over them: If an earthly prince were in such a strait between justice and mercy, he would be at a loss how to compromise the matter between them; but he who is God, and not man, knows how to find out an expedient to secure the honour of his justice, and yet advance the honour of his mercy. Man's compassions are nothing in comparison with the tender mercies of our God, whose thoughts and ways in receiving returning sinners, are as much above ours as heaven is above the earth, Isa. lv. 9. Note, It is a great encouragement to our hope in God's mercies, to remember that he is *God, and not man*. He is *the holy One*. One would think this were a reason why he should reject such a provoking people; no, God knows how to spare and pardon poor sinners, not only without any reproach to his holiness, but very much to the honour of it; as he is *faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, and therein *declares his righteousness*, now Christ has *purchased* the pardon, and he hath *promised* it. (2.) What he is to them; he is *the holy One in the midst of thee*, i. e. his holiness is engaged for the good of his church, and even in this corrupt, degenerate land and age, there were some that gave thanks at the remembrance of his holiness; and he required of them all to be *holy as he is*, Lev. xix. 2. As long as we have the *holy One in the midst of us* we are safe and well, but wo to us when he leaves us. Note, Those who submit to the influence may take the comfort of God's holiness.

2. Here is his wonderful *forwardness* to do good for Israel; which appears in this, that he will qualify them to receive the good he designs for them, *ver.* 10, 11. *They shall walk after the Lord*. This respects the same favour with that, chap. iii. 5. *They shall return, and seek the Lord their God*; it is spoken of the ten tribes, and had its accomplishment in part in the return of some of them, with those of the two tribes in Ezra's time; but it had its more full accomplishment in God's spiritual Israel, the gospel church brought together and incorporated by the gospel of Christ. The ancient Jews referred it to the time of the Messiah; the learned Dr Pocock looks upon it as a prophecy of Christ's coming to preach the gospel to the dispersed remnant of Israel, the children of God that were scattered abroad. And then observe,

(1.) How they were to be called and brought together; *the Lord shall roar like a lion*. The word of the Lord, so saith the Chaldee, shall be as a lion that roars. Christ is called, *the word of the lion of the tribe of Judah*, and his gospel in the beginning of it was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. When Christ cried with a loud voice, it was as *when a lion roared*, Rev. x. 3. The voice of the gospel was heard far, as the *roaring of a lion*, and it was a *mighty voice*. See Joel iii. 16.

(2.) What impression this call should make upon them, such an impression as the roaring of a lion makes upon all the beasts of the forest; *when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble*; see Amos iii. 8. *The lion has roared*, i. e. *the Lord God hath spoken*, and then *who will not fear?* When they whose hearts the gospel reached, trembled and were astonished, and cried out *What shall we do?* When they were by it put upon working out their salvation, and worshipping God with fear and trembling, then this promise was fulfilled. *The children shall tremble from the west*: The dispersed Jews were carried eastward, to Assyria and Babylon, and those that returned came from the east, therefore this seems to have reference to the calling of the Gentiles, that lay westward from Canaan, for that way especially the gospel spread. They shall *tremble*, i. e. they shall move and come with trembling, with care and haste *from the west*, from the nations that lay that way, to the mountain of the Lord, Isa. ii. 3. to the gospel Jerusalem, upon hearing the alarm of the gospel. The apostle speaks of *mighty signs and wonders* that were wrought by the preaching of the gospel from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum, Rom. xv. 19. Then the children *trembled from the west*. And whereas Israel after the flesh was dispersed in Egypt and Assyria, it is promised that they shall be effectually summoned from thence, *ver.* 11. *They shall tremble*, i. e. they shall come trembling, and with all haste, *as a bird upon the wing out of Egypt, and as a dove out of the land of Assyria*; a dove is noted for swift and constant flight, especially when she flies to her windows, which the flocking of Jews and Gentiles to the church is here compared to, as it is Isa. lx. 8. Wherever they are that belong to the election of grace, east, west, north, or south, they shall *hear the joyful sound*, and be wrought upon by it; they of Egypt and Assyria shall come together, those that lay most remote from each other shall meet in Christ; and be incorporated in the church. Of the uniting of Egypt and Assyria, it was prophesied, Isa. xix. 23.

(3.) What effect these impressions should have upon them; being *moved with fear*, they shall flee to the ark; they shall *walk after the Lord*; after the service of the Lord, so the Chaldee; they shall take the Lord Christ for their leader and commander, they shall lift themselves under him as the captain of their salvation, and give up themselves to the conduct of the Spirit as their guide by the word; they shall *leave all to follow Christ*, as becomes disciples. Note, Our holy trembling at the word of Christ will draw us to him,

him, not *drive* us from him. When he *roars like a lion*, the slaves tremble and flee from him, the children tremble and flee to him.

(4.) What entertainment they shall meet with at their return, *ver. 11. I will place them in their houses*, i. e. all those that come at the gospel call, shall have a place and a name in the gospel church, in the particular churches, which are *their houses*, to which they pertain; they shall dwell in God, and be at home in him; both easy and safe, as a man in his own house. They shall have mansions, for there are many, in *our Father's house*, in his tabernacle on earth, and his temple in heaven, in *everlasting habitations*, which may be called *their houses*, for they are *the lot* they shall stand in at the end of the days.

3. Here is a sad complaint of the treachery of Ephraim and Israel, which may be an intimation that it is not Israel after the flesh, but the spiritual Israel, to whom the foregoing promises belong, for as for this Ephraim, this Israel, they *compass God about with lies and deceit*, i. e. all their services of him, when they pretended to compass his altar, were feigned and hypocritical; when they surrounded him with their prayers and praises, every one having a petition to present to him, they *lied to him with their mouth, and flattered him with their tongue*, their pretensions were so fair, and yet their intentions so foul, that they would, if possible, have imposed upon God himself. Their professions and promises were all a cheat, and yet with these they thought to compass God about, to inclose him as it were, to keep him among them, and prevent his leaving them.

4. Here is a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, which they yet held fast; and which comes in as an aggravation of the perfidiousness of the ten tribes, and a reason why God had that mercy in store for Judah which he had not for Israel, *chap. i. 6, 7. for Judah yet rules with God, and is faithful with the saints*, or, *with the most holy*. (1.) *Judah rules with God*, i. e. he serves God, and the service of God is not only true liberty and freedom, but it is dignity and dominion. *Judah rules*, i. e. the princes and governors of Judah *rule with God*, i. e. they use their power for him, for his honour, and the support of his interest: those *rule with God* that *rule in the fear of God*; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3. and it is their honour to do so, and their praise shall be of God, as Judah's here is. Judah is Israel, a *prince with God*. (2.) He is *faithful with the holy God*, keeps close to his worship, and to his saints; to his priests, to his people: *faithful with the saints*, i. e. with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose steps they faithfully tread in. They *walk in the way of good men*, and those that do so *rule with God*, they have a mighty interest in heaven. Judah yet doth thus, which intimates that the time would come when Judah also would revolt and degenerate. Note, When we see how many there are that compass God about *with lies and deceit*, yet it may be a comfort to us to think that God has his remnant that cleave to him with purpose of heart, and are faithful to his saints, and for those who are thus faithful unto death, is reserved a crown of life, when hypocrites and all liars shall have their portion without.

C H A P. XII.

In this chapter, we have, (1.) *A high charge drawn up both against Israel and Judah for their sins, which were the ground of God's controversy with them*, *ver. 1, 2. Particularly the sin of fraud and injustice, which Ephraim is charged with*, *ver. 7. and justifies himself in*, *ver. 8. And the sin of idolatry*, *ver. 11. by which God is provoked to contend with them*, *ver. 14.* (2.) *The aggravations of the sins they are charged with, taken from the honour God put upon their father Jacob*, *ver. 3—5. The advancement of them into a people from low and mean beginnings*, *ver. 12, 13. And the provision he had made them of helps for their souls by the prophets he sent them*, *ver. 10.* (3.) *A call to the unconverted to turn to God*, *ver. 6.* (4.) *An intimation of mercy that God had in store for them*, *ver. 9.*

1. **E**phraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east-wind: he daily increaseth lies and desolation, and they do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt. 2. The LORD hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways; according to his doings will he recompense him. 3. ¶ He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: 4. Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there he spake with us. 5. Even the LORD God of hosts, the LORD is his memorial. 6. Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually.

In these verses,

1. Ephraim is convicted of folly in staying himself upon Egypt and Assyria, when he was in straits, *ver. 1. Ephraim feedeth on wind*, i. e. feeds himself with vain hopes of assistance from man, when he is at variance with God; and when he meets with disappointments, yet he pursues the same game, and greedily pants and follows after the east-wind, which he cannot catch hold of, nor if he could would it be nourishing, nay, it would be noxious; we say of the wind in the east, it is good neither for man nor beast. It was said, *chap. viii. 7. he sows the wind*, and as he sows, so he reaps the whirlwind; and as he reaps so he feeds on the wind, the east-wind. Note, Those that make creatures their confidence, make fools of themselves, and take a great deal of pains to put a cheat upon their own souls, and to prepare vexation for themselves. *He daily increaseth lies*, i. e. multiplies his correspondences and leagues with his neighbours, which will all prove deceitful to him; nay, they will prove desolation to him; those very nations that he makes his refuge will prove his ruin. Those that stay themselves upon lies will be still coveting to increase them, that they may build their hopes firm upon them; as if many lies twisted together would make one truth, or many broken reeds and rotten supports one sound one; which is a great delusion, and will prove to them a great desolation; for they that observe lying vanities, the more they increase them, the more disappointments they prepare for themselves, and the further they run from their own mercies. The men of Ephraim did so when they thought to secure the Assyrians in their interests by a solemn league, signed, sealed, and sworn to, they make a covenant with the Assyrians, but they will find there is no hold of them; that potent prince will be a slave to his word no longer than he pleaseth. They thought to secure the Egyptians for their confederates by a rich present of the commodities of their country, not only to purchase their favour, but to shew that their friendship was worth having, *oil is carried into Egypt*. But the Egyptians when they had got the bribe dropped the cause, and Ephraim was never the better for them; *Oleum perdidit & operam*. This was feeding on wind; this was increasing lies and desolation.

2. Judah is contended with too, and Jacob, which includes both Ephraim and Judah, *ver. 2. The Lord has also a controversy with Judah*, for tho' he had a while ago ruled with God, and been faithful with the saints, yet now he begins to degenerate; or, tho' in keeping close to the house of David, and the house of Aaron, and in them to the covenants of royalty and priesthood, they were so far in the right, in the former they ruled with God, and in the latter were faithful to the saints, yet upon other accounts God had a controversy with them, and would punish them. Note, Mens being in the right in some things, in the main things, shall not exempt them from correction, and therefore should not exempt them from reproof for those things wherein they are in the wrong. There were those of the seven churches of Asia which Christ approved of and commended, and yet he adds, *Nevertheless I have something against thee*. So here; tho' Jacob is a people near to God, yet God will punish him according to the evil ways he was found in, and the evil doings he was found guilty of; for God sees sin even in his own people, and will reckon with them for it.

3. Both Ephraim and Judah are put in mind of their father Jacob, whose seed they were, and whose name they bore, and it was their honour; of the extraordinary things he did, and God did for him; that they might be the more ashamed of themselves, for degenerating from so illustrious a progenitor, and stained the lustre of so great a name, and yet that they might be engaged and encouraged to return to God, the God of their father Jacob, in hopes for his sake to find favour with him. He had called this people Jacob, *ver. 2. threatening to punish them*; but how shall I give them up? How shall that dear name be forgotten?

Three glorious things concerning Jacob the person, Jacob the people are here put in mind of; but by brief hints only, for it is presumed they knew the story.

(1.) His struggling with Esau in the womb. There he took his brother by the heel, *ver. 3.* We have the story, *Gen. xxv. 26.* it was an early act of bravery, and an effort for the best precedence, a pious ambition of that birth-right in the covenant, which Esau is justly branded as profane for despising. But his degenerate seed by mingling themselves with the nations, and making leagues with them, profaned that crown, and laid that honour in the dust which he so gloriously put in for. Then it was that the dominion was given him, *The elder shall serve the younger*; then he was owned of God as his beloved; *Jacob have I loved*, but *Esau have I hated*, but they had by their sin forfeited both the love of God, and dominion over their neighbours.

(2.) His wrestling with the angel. Remember how your father Jacob had power with God by his own strength, the strength he had by the gift of God, who pleaded not against him by his great power, but put strength into him, *Job xxiii. 6.* The angel he wrestled with is called God, and therefore is supposed to be the Son of God, the Angel of the Covenant. "God was both a combatant with Jacob, and an assistant of him, shewing in the latter regard greater strength than in the former, fighting as it were against him with his left hand, and for him with his right."

"right, and to that putting greater force." So Dr Pocock. The providence of God fought against him, when he met with one danger after another in his return homewards, but the grace of God enabled him to go on cheerfully in his way, and when his faith acted upon the divine promise that was for him, prevailed above his fears that arose from the divine providences that were against him, then by his strength he had power with God. But it refers especially to his prayer for deliverance from Esau, and for a blessing, he had power over the angel and prevailed, for he wept and made supplication. Here was a mixture of the greatest courage and the greatest tenderness, Jacob wrestling like a champion, and yet weeping like a child. Note, Prayers and tears are the weapons with which the saints have obtained the most glorious victories. Thus Jacob convinced Israel, a prince with God; his posterity was called Israel, but they were unworthy the name, for they had forfeited and lost their communion with God, and their interest in him by revolting from their duty to him.

(3.) His meeting with God at Bethel; God found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. God found him the first time in Bethel, as he went to Padan-aram, Gen. xxviii. 10. and a second time after his return, Gen. xxxv. 9, &c. It is likely this refers to both; for in both God spake to Jacob, and renewed the covenant with him, and the prophet might very well say, there he spake with us who are the seed of Jacob, for both times that God spake with Jacob at Bethel, he spake with him concerning his seed, Gen. xxviii. 14. thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth; and Gen. xxxv. 12. this land I will give to thy seed; thus God then covenanted with him and his seed after him. Now justly are they upbraided with this; for in that very place which their father Jacob called Bethel, the house of God, in remembrance of the communion he there had with God, did they set up one of the calves, and worshipped it, and so turned that Bethel into a Beth-aven, a house of iniquity. There God spake with them exceeding great and precious promises which they had despised, and lost the benefit of.

Two inferences are here drawn from these stories concerning Jacob, for instruction to his seed.

1. Here is an use of information; from what passed between God and Jacob, we may learn, that *Jehovah, the Lord God of hosts, is the God of Israel*; he was the God of Jacob, and this is his memorial throughout all the generations of the seed of Jacob, ver. 5. the more shame for them who forgot the memorial of their church, deserted the God of their fathers, and exchanged a Lord of hosts for Baalim. Note, Those only are accounted the people of God that keep up a memorial of God, such memorials of him as he himself hath instituted, by which he makes himself known, and will have us to remember him. Here are two memorials of his, by which he is distinguished from all others, and is to be acknowledged and adored by us. (1.) The former speaks his existence of himself. He is Jehovah, much the same with I am, the same that was, and is, and is to come, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable. Jehovah is his memorial, his peculiar name. (2.) The latter speaks his dominion over all; he is the God of hosts, that has all the hosts of heaven and earth at his beck and command, and makes what use he pleaseth of them. Jacob saw Mahanaim, God's two hosts, about the time that he wrestled with the angel, Gen. xxxii. 1, 2. and so learned to call God the God of hosts, and transmitted it to us as his memorial. God's names, titles, and attributes, are the memorials of him, there is no need of images to be so. And that which was a revelation of God to one, is his memorial to many, to all generations.

2. Here is an use of exhortation, ver. 6. Is this so that Jacob thy father had this communion with the Lord God of hosts, and and is this still his memorial? (1.) Then let those that have gone astray from God be converted to him; therefore turn thou to thy God. He that was the God of Jacob, is the God of Israel, is thy God, from him thou hast unjustly and unkindly revolted, therefore turn thou to him by repentance and faith, turn to him as thine, to love him, obey him, and depend upon him. (2.) Then let those that are converted to him, walk with him in all holy conversation and godliness; keep mercy and judgment, mercy in relieving and succouring the poor and distressed, judgment in rendering to all their due; be kind to all, do wrong to none. Keep piety and judgment, so it may be read; live righteously and godly in this present world; be devout and be honest. Do not only practise these occasionally, but be careful and constant, and conscientious in the practice of them. (3.) Let those that walk with God be encouraged to live a life of dependence upon him, wait on thy God continually, with a believing expectation to receive from him all those succours and supplies thou standest in need of. Those that live a life of conformity to God, may live a life of confidence and comfort in him, if it be not their own fault. Let our eyes be ever towards the Lord, and let us preserve a holy security and serenity of mind under the protection of the divine power, and the influence of the divine favour, looking without anxiety for a dubious event, and by faith keeping our spirits sedate and even, and that is waiting on God as our God in covenant, and this we must do continually.

7. ¶ He is a merchant, the balances of deceit are in his hand: he loveth to oppress. 8. And Ephraim said, Yet I am become rich, I have found me out substance: in all my labours they shall find none iniquity in me, that were sin. 9. And I that am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, will yet make thee to dwell in tabernacles, as in the days of the solemn feast. 10. I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets. 11. Is there iniquity in Gilead? surely they are vanity, they sacrifice bullocks in Gilgal, yea, their altars are as heaps in the furrows of the fields. 12. And Jacob fled into the country of Syria, and Israel served for a wife, and for a wife he kept sheep. 13. And by a prophet the LORD brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a prophet was he preserved. 14. Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly: therefore shall he leave his blood upon him: and his reproach shall his Lord return unto him.

Here are intermixed in these verses,

1. *Reproofs for sin.* When God is coming forth to contend with a people, that he may demonstrate his own righteousness, he will demonstrate their unrighteousness. Ephraim was called to turn to his God, and keep judgment, ver. 6. now to shew that he had need of that call, he is charged with turning from his God by idolatry, and breaking the laws of justice and judgment.

1. He is here charged with injustice against the precepts of the second table, ver. 7, 8. Where observe,

1. What the sin is wherewith he is charged. *He is a merchant.* The margin reads it as a proper name, *He is Canaan*, or a Canaanite, unworthy to be denominated from Jacob and Israel, and worthy to be cast out with a curse from this good land, as the Canaanites were. See Amos ix. 7. But Canaan sometimes signifies a merchant, and therefore most likely to do so here, where Ephraim is charged with deceit in trade. Tho' God had given his people a land flowing with milk and honey, yet he did not forbid them to enrich themselves by merchandise, and they succeeded the Canaanites in that as well as in their husbandry; they sucked the abundance of the seas, and the treasures hid in the sand, Deut. xxxiii. 19. And if they had been fair merchants, it had been no reproach at all to them, but an honour and blessing; but he is such a merchant as the Canaanites were, that were honest only with good looking to, and if they could, cheated all they dealt with. Ephraim doth so, he deceives and oppresseth. Note, There is oppression by fraud, as well as oppression by force. It is not only princes, lords, and masters, that oppress their subjects, tenants, and servants, but merchants and traders are often guilty of oppressing those they deal with, when they impose upon their ignorance, or take advantage of their necessity, to make them hard bargains, or are rigorous and severe in exacting their debts; Ephraim cheated, (1.) With a great deal of art and cunning; the balances of deceit are in his hand; he useth balances, and delivers his goods by weight and measure as if he would be very exact; but they are balances of deceipts, false weights and false measures, and thus under colour of doing right, he doth the greatest wrong. Note, God has his eye upon merchants and traders, when they are weighing their goods and paying their money, whether they do honestly or deceitfully; he observes what balances they have in their hand, and how they hold them, and tho' those they deal with may not be aware of that flight of hand with which they make them balances of deceit, God sees it, and knows it. Trades by the wit of man are made mysteries, but it is pity that by the sin of man they should ever be made mysteries of iniquity. (2.) With a great deal of pleasure and pride; He loveth to oppress. To oppress is bad enough, but to love it is much worse; his conscience doth not check and reprove him for it, as it ought to do, if it did, tho' he committed the sin he could not delight in it; but his corruptions are so strong, and have so triumphed over his convictions, that he not only loves the gain of oppression, but he loves to oppress; sins for sinning sake, and takes a pleasure in out-witting, and over-reaching those that suspect him not.

2. How he justifies himself in this sin, ver. 8. Wicked men will have something to say for themselves now when they are told of their faults, some frivolous turn off or other, wherewith to evade the convictions of the word; Ephraim stands indicted for a common cheat; now see what he pleads to the indictment; he doth not deny the charge, or plead not guilty, yet doth not make a penitent confession of it and ask pardon, but insists upon his own justification. Suppose it were so that he did use balances of deceit, yet,

1. He pleads that he had got a good estate. Let the prophet say what he pleased of his deceit, of the sin of it, and the curse of God that attended it, he could not be convinced there was any harm or danger in it, for this he was sure of, that he had thriven

thriven in it, yet *I am become rich, I have found me out substance*. Whatever you make of it, I have made a good hand of it. Note, Carnal hearts are often confirmed in a *good opinion* of their *evil ways*, by their worldly prosperity and success in those ways. But it is a great mistake; every word in what Ephraim saith here speaks his folly. (1.) It is folly to call the riches of this world *substance*, for they are things that *are not*, Prov. xxiii. 5. (2.) It is folly to think we have them *by ourselves*, to say, as some read it, *I have made myself rich*, what *substance* I have is owing purely to my ingenuity and industry, *I have found it, my might and power of my hand has gotten me this wealth*. (3.) It is folly to think that what we have is *for our selves*. I have found me out substance, as if we had it for our own proper use and behoof, whereas we hold *in trust* only as stewards. (4.) It is folly to think that riches are things to be *gloried in*, and to say it with exultation, *I am become rich*; riches are not the honours of the soul, are not peculiar to the best men, nor sure to us, and therefore *let not the rich man glory in his riches*, Jam. i. 9, 10. (5.) It is folly to think that growing rich in a sinful way either doth make us innocent, or will make us safe, or may make us easy in that way; for the prosperity of fools deceives and destroys them. See *Isa. lvii. 10. Prov. i. 32.*

2. He pleads that he had *kept a good reputation*. It is common for sinners, when they are justly reprov'd by their ministers, to appeal to their neighbours, and because they know no ill by them, or will say none, or think *well* of what the prophets charge them with as *ill*, fly in the face of their reprovers; *In all my labours* (saith Ephraim) *they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin*. Note, Carnal hearts are apt to build a good opinion of themselves upon the fair character they have among their neighbours. Ephraim was very secure, for (1.) All his neighbours knew him to be *diligent* in his business; they had an eye upon *all his labours*, and commended him for them, *men will praise thee, when thou dost well for thy self*. (2.) None of them knew him to be *deceitful* in his business. He played his cards so well, that nobody could say to the contrary but that he *played fair*. For either, 1. He *concealed* the fraud, so that none *discovered* it. Whatever iniquity there is *they shall find none*; as if no iniquity were displeasing to God, and damning to the soul, but that which is open and scandalous before men. What will it avail us that men shall *find no iniquity* in us, when God finds a great deal, and will bring every secret work, even secret frauds, into judgment. (2.) He *excuseth* the fraud so that none *condemned* it. They shall find *no iniquity in me that were sin*, nothing very bad, nothing but what is very excusable, only some venial sins, sins not worth speaking of, which they think God will make nothing of, because they do not. It is a fashionable iniquity, it is customary, it is what every body doth, it is pleasant, it is gainful, and this they think is *no iniquity* that is *sin*, no body will think the worse of them for it; but God sees not as man sees, he judgeth not as man judgeth.

2. He is here charged with *idolatry*, against the precepts of the first table; with that *iniquity* which is in a special manner *vanity*, the making and worshipping of images, which are *vanities*, ver. 11. *Surely they are vanity*; they do not profit but deceive. Now the prophet mentions two places notorious for idolatry. (1.) Gilead on the other side Jordan, which had been branded for it before, chap. vi. 8. *Is there iniquity in Gilead?* it is a thing to be admired, it is a thing to be sadly lamented; What! *iniquity* in Gilead! idolatry there? Gilead was a fruitful pleasant country, pleasant to a proverb, *Jer. xxii. 6.* and doth it so ill requite the Lord? It was a frontier-country, and lay much exposed to the insults of enemies, and therefore stood in special need of the divine protection, what, and yet by iniquity throw itself out of that protection? *Is there iniquity in Gilead?* yea, (2.) And in Gilgal too, there they *sacrifice bullocks*, chap. ix. 15. and there *their altars* which they have set up, either to strange gods in opposition to God himself, or to the God of Israel in opposition to his own appointed altar, are as thick as *heaps of muck in the furrows of the field* that is to be sown. chap. viii. 11. *Is there iniquity in Gilead only?* So some; is it only in those remote parts of the nation that people are so superstitious, where they border upon other nations? No, they are as bad at Gilgal. In Gilead God protected Jacob their father (of whom he had been speaking) from the rage of Laban, and will you *there* commit iniquity?

2. Here are *threatnings of wrath* for sin. Some make that to be so, ver. 9. *I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles as in the days of the appointed time*, i. e. I will bring thee into such a condition as Israel was in when they dwelt in tents and wandered for forty years, that was the *time appointed in the wilderness*. Ephraim forgot that God brought him out of Egypt, and brought him up to be what he was, and was proud of his wealth, and took sinful courses to increase it, and therefore God threatens to bring him to a *tabernacle* state again, to a poor, mean, desolate, unsettled condition. Note, it is just with God when men have by their sins turned their tents into houses, by his judgments to turn their houses into tents again. However that is certainly a threatening, ver. 14. *Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly*. See how men are deceived in their opinion of themselves, and how they will one day be undeceived; Ephraim thought there was *no iniquity* in him that deserved to be called *sin*, ver. 8. But God

tells him there was that in him that was sin, and would be found so, if he did not repent and reform; for (1.) It was extremely *offensive* to his God. *Ephraim provoked him to anger most bitterly*, with his iniquities that are so *displeasing* to God, and to him too will be *bitterness in the latter end*. He was so wilful in sinning against his knowledge and convictions, that any one might see and say he designed no other but to provoke God in the highest degree. (2.) It would certainly be *destructive* to himself, that cannot be otherwise which provokes God against him, and kindles the fire of his wrath. Therefore (1.) He shall take away his forfeited life; *he shall leave his blood upon him*, i. e. he shall not hold him guiltless, but bring upon him that death which is the wages of sin; *his blood shall be upon his own head*, (2 Sam. i. 16.) for his own iniquity hath testified against him, and he alone shall bear it. Note, When sinners perish, their blood is left upon them. (2.) He shall take away his forfeited honour; *his reproach shall his Lord return upon him*; God is *his Lord*, he had by idolatry and other sins *reproached the Lord*, and done dishonour to him and to his name and family, and had given occasion to others to reproach him; and now God will *return the reproach upon him*, according to the word he has spoken, that those who *despise him* shall be *lightly esteemed*. Note, Shameful sins shall have shameful punishments. If Ephraim put contempt on his God, he shall be so reduced as that all his neighbours shall look with contempt upon him.

3. Here are *memorials of former mercy*, which come in to convict them of base ingratitude in revolting from God. Let them blush to remember,

(1.) That God had *raised them from meanness*. When Ephraim was become *rich*, and was proud of that, he forgot that which God (that they might not forget it) obliged them every year to acknowledge, *Deut. xxvi. 5. A Syrian ready to perish was my father*. But God here puts them in mind of it, ver. 12. Let them remember not only the honours of their father Jacob, what a *mighty prince* he was with God, ver. 3. (an honour which they had no share in, while they were in rebellion against God) but what a *poor servant* he was to Laban, which was sufficient to *mortify* them that were puffed up with the estates they had raised. *Jacob fled into Syria* from a malicious brother, and there *served* a covetous uncle *for a wife*, and *for a wife he kept sheep*, because he had no estate to endow a wife with. Jacob was poor and low, and a fugitive, therefore his posterity ought not to be proud. He was a plain man dwelling in tents, and keeping sheep, therefore *balances of deceit* ill became them; he *served for a wife* that was not a Canaanite's as Esau's wives were, therefore it was a shame for them to degenerate into Canaanites, and mingle themselves with the nations. God wonderfully preserved him in his flight, and preserved him in his service, so that he multiplied exceedingly, and from that root in a dry ground sprang an illustrious nation that bare his name, which magnifies the goodness of God both to him and them, and leaves them under the stain of base ingratitude to that God who was their founder and benefactor.

(2.) That God had *rescued them from misery*; had raised them to what they were, not only out of poverty, but out of slavery, ver. 13. which laid them under much stronger obligations to serve him, and under a yet deeper guilt in serving other gods. (1.) God *brought Israel out of Egypt* on purpose that they might serve him, and by redeeming them out of bondage, acquired a special title to them and to their service. (2.) He *preserved* them, as sheep are kept by the shepherd's care. He *preserved* them from Pharaoh's rage, at the sea, even at the Red-sea, protected them from all the perils of the wilderness, and provided for them. (3.) He did this *by a prophet*, i. e. Moses, who tho' he is called *king in Jeshurun*, Deut. xxxiii. 5. yet what he did for Israel he did *as a prophet* by direction from God, and by the power of his word; the ensign of his authority was not a royal sceptre, but the *rod of God*, with that he summoned both Egypt's plagues and Israel's blessings. Moses, as a prophet, was a type of Christ, *Acts iii. 22.* and it is by Christ as a prophet, that we are brought out of the Egypt of sin and Satan, by the power of his truth. Now this shews how very unworthy and ungrateful this people were, (1.) In rejecting their God who had brought them out of Egypt, which in the preface to the commandments is particularly a reason for the first, why they should have no other gods before him. (2.) In despising and persecuting *his prophets*, whom they should have loved and valued, and have studied to answer God's end in sending them for the sake of that prophet by whom God had brought them out of Egypt, and *preserved* them in the wilderness. Note, The benefit we have had *by the word of God* greatly aggravates our sin and folly, if we put any slight upon the word of God.

(3.) That God had *taken care of their education* as they grew up. This instance of God's goodness we have, ver. 10. As by a prophet he delivered them, so *by prophets* he still continued to *speak* to them. Man that is *formed* out of the earth, is *fed* out of the earth, so that nation that was formed by prophecy, by prophecy was *fed* and taught; *beginning at Moses* and so going on to *all the prophets* through the several ages of that church, we find that divine revelation was all along their tuition. (1.) They had *prophets*, raised up among themselves, *Amos ii. 11.* a succession of

of them, scarce ever without a Spirit of prophecy among them more or less, from Moses to Malachi. (2.) These prophets were *seers*, they had *visions*, and *dreams*, in which God discovered his mind to them immediately, with a full assurance that it was his mind, *Numb. xii. 6.* (3.) These visions were multiplied, God spake not only *once*, *yea twice*, but many a time; if one vision was not regarded he sent another. The prophets had variety of visions, and frequent repetitions of the same. (4.) God spake to them *by the prophets*; what the prophets received from the Lord they plainly and faithfully delivered to them. The people at mount Sinai begged that God would speak to them by men like themselves, and he did so. (5.) In speaking to them by the prophets he *used similitudes*, to make the messages he sent by them both *intelligible*, and more *affecting*, and more likely to be remembered. The visions they saw were often *similitudes*, and their discourses were embellished with very apt comparisons. And as God by his prophets, so by his Son he *used similitudes*, for *he opened his mouth in parables*. Note, God keeps an account, whether we do or no, of the sermons we hear; and those that have long enjoyed the means of grace in purity, plenty, and power, that have been frequently, faithfully, and familiarly told the mind of God, will have a great deal to answer for another day, if they persist in a course of iniquity.

4. Here are intimations of further mercy, and this remembered too in the midst of sin and wrath, as some understand, *ver. 9.* *I that am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt*, that then and there took thee to be my people, and have approved myself thy God ever since, in a constant series of merciful providences, have yet a kindness for thee as bad as thou art; and I will make thee to dwell in tabernacles, not as in the wilderness, but as in the days of the solemn feast, the feast of tabernacles which was celebrated with great joy, *Lev. xxiii. 40.* (1.) They shall be made to see by the grace of God, that tho' they are rich and have found out substance, yet they are but in a tabernacle-state, and have in their worldly wealth *no continuing city*. (2.) They shall yet have cause to rejoice in God, and have opportunity to do it in publick ordinances. The feast of tabernacles was the first solemn feast the Jews kept after their return out of Babylon, *Ezra iii. 4.* (3.) This, as other promises, was to have its full accomplishment in the grace of the gospel, which provides tabernacles for believers in their way to heaven, and furnisheth them with matter of joy, holy joy, joy in God, such as was in the feast of tabernacles, *Zech. xiv. 18, 19.*

C H A P. XIII.

The same strings, tho' generally unpleasing ones, are harped upon in this chapter, that were in those before. People care not to be told either of their sin, or of their danger by sin, and yet it is necessary, and for their good, to be told of both, nor can they better hear of either than from the word of God, and from their faithful ministers while the sin may be repented of, and the danger prevented. Here (1.) The people of Israel are reprov'd and threatened for their idolatry, *ver. 1—4.* (2.) They are reprov'd and threatened for their wantonness, pride, and luxury, and other abuses of their wealth and prosperity, *ver. 5—8.* (3.) The ruin that is coming upon them for these and all their other sins, is foretold as very terrible, *ver. 12, 13, 15, 16.* (4.) Those among them that yet retain a respect for their God, are here encouraged to hope that he will yet appear for their relief, tho' their kings and princes, and all their other supports and succours, fail them, *ver. 9, 10, 11, 14.*

1. **W**HEN Ephraim spake, trembling, he exalted himself in Israel; but when he offended in Baal, he died. 2. And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves. 3. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney. 4. Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no God but me: for there is no saviour besides me.

Idolatry was the sin that did most easily beset the Jewish nation, till after the captivity, the ten tribes from the first were guilty of it, but especially after the days of Ahab; and this is the sin which in these verses they are charged with. Observe,

1. The provision that God made to prevent their falling into idolatry. This we have, *ver. 4.* God did what was fit to be done to keep them close to himself, what could have been done more? (1.) He made known himself to them as *the Lord their God*, and

took them to be his people in a peculiar manner; both by his word and by his works all along from the land of Egypt, he declared, *I am the Lord thy God*; he told them so from heaven at mount Sinai, that he was *the Lord* and *their God* who brought them out of the land of Egypt. This he continued both to declare and to prove to them by his prophets, and by his providences. (2.) He gave them a law forbidding them to worship any other. *Thou shalt know no god but me*, not only shalt not own and worship any other, but shalt not acquaint thyself with any other, nor make the rites and usages of the Gentiles familiar to thee. Note, It is a happy ignorance not to know that which we ought not to meddle with. We find those praised who *have not known the depths of Satan*. (3.) He gave them a good reason for it; there is *no saviour besides me*. Whatever we take for our God we expect to have for our saviour, *i. e.* to make us happy here and hereafter; as where we have protection we owe allegiance, so where we have salvation and hope for it, we owe adoration.

2. The honour that Ephraim had while he kept himself clear from idolatry, *ver. 1.* *While Ephraim spake trembling*, or *with trembling*, *i. e.* (as Dr Pocock understands it) while he behaved himself towards God as his father Jacob did, with *weeping and supplications*, and spake not proudly and insolently against God and his prophets, while he kept up a holy fear of God, and worshipped him in that fear, so long *he exalted himself in Israel*, *i. e.* he was very considerable among the tribes, and made a figure; Jeroboam, who was of that tribe, *exalted himself* and his family; when he spake *there was trembling*, *i. e.* all about him stood in awe of him; so some understand it. Note, Those that humble themselves, especially that humble themselves before God, *shall be exalted*. When people speak with modesty, and jealousy of themselves, with a diffidence of their own judgment, and a deference to others, they *exalt themselves*, they gain a reputation. But as for Ephraim, he soon lost himself, *when he offended in Baal he died*, *i. e.* he lost his reputation, his honour soon dwindled and sunk, and was laid in the dust. Baal is here put for all idolatry, when Ephraim forsook God and took to worship images, the state received its death's wound, and was never good for any thing after. Note, Deserting God is the death of any person or persons.

3. The lamentable growth of idolatry among them, *ver. 2.* *Now they sin more and more*, when once he began to offend in Baal, the ice was broke, and he grew worse and worse; coveted more idols, doted more upon those he had, and grew more ridiculous in the worship of them. Note, The way of idolatry, as of other sins, is down-hill, and men cannot easily stop themselves. It is the sad case of all those who have forsaken God, that they sin yet *more and more*. Let us trace them in their apostasy. (1.) They made them *molten images*, proud to have gods that they could cast into what mould they pleased; probably, these were the calves in little like the silver shrines for Diana, the zealots for the calf-worship carried about with them, it may be, images, of the gods they worshipped, made on purpose for themselves. (2.) They made them of *their silver*, and then doubted not of their property in them, when they purchased them with their own money, or made of their own plate melted down for that purpose. See what cost they put themselves to in the service of their idols, which they honoured with the best they had, and therefore made their molten images of silver. (3.) They made them according to their own understanding, *i. e.* according to their own fancy; they consulted with themselves what shape they should make it in, and made it accordingly; *a god*, according to the best of their judgment. Or, according to their own likeness, in the form of a man. And when they made their idols men like themselves, in shape, they made themselves stocks and stones like them, in reality; for *they that make them are like unto them*, and so is every one that trusteth in him. (4.) It was all the work of the craftsmen. Their images do not pretend, like that of Diana, to have come down from Jupiter, *Acts xix. 35.* no, perhaps the workmen stamped their names upon them, such an idol was such a man's work. See *chap. viii. 6.* *Isa. xlv. 9, &c.* (5.) Though they were thus the work of their hands, yet they were the beloved of their souls; for they say of them, *Let the men that sacrifice, kiss the calves*. Either the priests called upon the people thus to pay their homage, or the people who were not allowed to come so near themselves, called upon the *men that sacrificed*, *i. e.* the priests that attended for them to *kiss the calves* in their name and stead, because they could not reach to do it, so very fond were they to pay their utmost respects to such an idol as they were taught to have a veneration for. Though they were calves, yet if they were gods, the worshippers by themselves, or their proxies, thus made their honours to them. They *kissed the calves* in token of the adoration of them, affection for them, and allegiance to them as theirs. Thus we are bid to *kiss the Son*, to take him for our Lord, and our God.

4. Threatenings of wrath for their idolatry. The Lord, whose name is *jealous*, is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another, and therefore all they that worship images, shall be confounded, especially if Ephraim do it, *Psal. xcvi. 7.* Because they are so fond of kissing their calves, therefore God will give them sensible convictions of their folly, *ver. 3.* They promise themselves a great deal of safety and satisfaction in the worship

of their idols, and that their prosperity will thereby be established, but God tells them they shall be disappointed, and driven away in their wickedness. This is illustrated by four similitudes; they shall be, (1.) As the morning cloud which promises showers of rain to the parched ground. (2.) As the early dew which seems to be an earnest of such showers, but both pass away, and the day proves as dry and hot as ever; so fleet and transitory their profession of piety was, chap. vi. 4. and so had they disappointed God's expectation from them; and therefore it is just that so their prosperity should be, and so their expectations from their idols should be disappointed, and so will all theirs be that make an idol of this world. (3.) They are as the chaff, light and worthless; and they shall be driven as the chaff is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, Psal. i. 4.—xxxv. 5. Job xxi. 18. Nay, (4.) They are as the smoke, noisome and offensive, see Isa. lxv. 5. and they shall be driven away as the smoke out of the chimnies, that is soon dissipated and disappears, Psal. lxxviii. 2. Note, No solid lasting comfort is to be expected any where but in God.

5. ¶ I did know thee in the wilderness, in the land of great drought. 6. According to their pasture, so were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted: therefore have they forgotten me. 7. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion; as a leopard by the way will I observe them. 8. I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rent the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beasts shall tear them.

We may observe here,

1. The plentiful provision God had made for Israel, and the seasonable supplies he had blessed them with, ver. 5. *I did know thee in the wilderness*, i. e. took cognizance of thy case, and made provision for thee, even in a land of great drought, when thou wast in extreme distress, and when no relief was to be had in an ordinary way; see a description of this wilderness, Deut. viii. 15: Jer. ii. 6. and say, the God that knew them, and owned them, and fed them there, was a friend indeed, for he was a friend at need, and an all-sufficient friend, that could victual so vast an army when all ordinary ways of provision were cut off, and where, if miracles had not been their daily bread, they must have all perished. Note, Help at an exigence is very obliging, and must never be forgotten.

2. Their unworthy, ungrateful abuse of God's favour to them. God not only took care of them in the wilderness, but put them in possession of Canaan, a good land, a large and fat pasture. And, ver. 6. *According to their pasture so were they filled*. God gave them both plenty and dainties, and they did not spare it, but having been long confined to manna, when they came into Canaan, they fed themselves to the full. And this was no hopeful presage, it would have looked better, and promised better, if they had been more modest and moderate in the use of their plenty, and had learned to deny themselves; but what was the effect of it? *They were filled, and their heart was exalted*. Their luxury and sensuality made them proud, insolent, and secure. The best comment upon this is that of Moses, Deut. xxxii. 13, 14, 15. But *Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked*. When the body was stuffed up with plenty, the soul was puffed up with pride. Then they began to think their religion a thing below them, and they could not persuade themselves to stoop to the services of it. *The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God*. When they were poor and lame in the wilderness, they thought it was necessary for them to keep in with God, but when they were replenished and established in Canaan, they began to think they had no further need of him; *Their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me*. Note, Worldly prosperity when it feeds mens pride, makes them forgetful of God; for they remember him only when they want him. When Israel was filled, what more could the Almighty do for them? And therefore they said to him, *Depart from us*, Job xxii. 17. It is sad, that those favours which ought to make us mindful of God, and studious what we shall render to him, should make us unmindful of him, and regardless what we do against him. We ought to know that we live upon God, when we live upon common providence, though we do not, as Israel in the wilderness, live upon miracles.

3. God's just resentment of their base ingratitude, ver. 7, 8. The judgments threatened, ver. 3. spoke the departure of all good from them. The threatenings here go further, and speak the breaking in of all evils upon them; for God that had so much befriended them, now turns to be their enemy, and fights against them, which is expressed here very terribly; *I will be unto them as a lion, and as a leopard*. The lion is strong, and there is no resisting him. The leopard is here taken notice of to be crafty and vigilant, as a leopard by the way will I observe them. As that beast of prey lies in wait by the road-side to catch travellers and devour them, so will God by his judgments watch over them to do them hurt, as he had watched over them to do them good, Jer. xlv. 27. No opportunity shall be slight that may accelerate

or aggravate their ruin. Jer. v. 6. *A leopard shall watch over their cities*. A lynx or spotted beast (and such the leopard is) is noted for quicksightedness above any creature (*lynx visus*) and so it intimates, that not only the power, but the wisdom of God is engaged against those whom he has a controversy with. Some read it, (and the original will bear it) *I will be as a leopard in the way of Assyria*. The judgments of God shall surprize them then, when they are going to the Assyrians to seek for protection and help from them. It is added, *I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved*, and thereby exasperated and made more cruel, (2 Sam. xvii. 8. Prov. xxviii. 15.) which intimates how highly God was provoked, and he would make them feel it; he will rent the caul of their heart. The lion is observed to aim at the heart of the beasts he preys upon, and thus will God devour them like a lion. He will send such judgments upon them as shall prey upon their spirits, and consume their vitals. Their heart was exalted, ver. 6. But God will take an effectual course to bring it down. *The wild beast shall tear them*; not only God will be as a lion and leopard to them, but the metaphor shall be fulfilled in the letter, for noisome beasts are one of the four sore judgments with which God will destroy a provoking people, Ezek. xiv. 15. Now all this teacheth us, (1.) That abused goodness turns into the greater severity. Those who despise God and affront him, when he is to them as a careful tender shepherd, shall find he will be even to his own flock as the beasts of prey are. Those whom God has in vain endured with much long-suffering, and invited with much affection, in them he will shew his wrath, and make them vessels of it. Rom. ix. 22. *Patientia læsa fit furor*. (2.) That the judgments of God, when they come with commission against impenitent sinners, will be irresistible, and very terrible. They will rend the caul of the heart, will fill the soul with confusion, and tear that in pieces, and we are as unable to grapple with them, as a lamb is to make his part good against a roaring lion; for who knows the power of God's anger? Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, let us be persuaded to make peace with him, for are we stronger than he?

9. ¶ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self, but in me is thine help. 10. I will be thy king: where is any other that may save thee in all thy cities? and thy judges of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes? 11. I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath. 12. The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up: his sin is hid. 13. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him, he is an unwise son, for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children. 14. I will ransom them from the power of the grave: I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction; repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. 15. ¶ Though he be fruitful among his brethren, an east-wind shall come, the wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up, he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. 16. Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword; their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

The first of these verses is the summary or contents of all the rest, ver. 9. Where we have, (1.) All the blame of Israel's ruin laid upon themselves. *O Israel, thy perdition is thence*; it is of and from thy self; or, *It has destroyed thee, O Israel*; i. e. All that sin and folly of thine which thou art before charged with. As thy own wickedness has many a time corrected thee, so that has now at length destroyed thee. Note, Wilful sinners are self-destroyers; obstinate impenitency is the grossest self-murder. Those that are destroyed of the destroyer have their blood upon their own head, they have destroyed themselves. (2.) All the glory of Israel's relief ascribed to God; *but in me is thy help*. That is, 1. It might have been; I would have helped thee, and healed thee, but thou wouldest not be healed and helped, but wast resolutely set upon thine own destruction. This will aggravate the condemnation of sinners, not only that they did that which tended to their own ruin, but they opposed the offers God made them, and the methods he took with them to have prevented it; *I would have gathered them, and they would not*. They might have been easily and effectually helped, but they put the help away from them. Nay, 2. It may yet be; thy case is bad, but it is not desperate: *Thou hast destroyed thy self*, but come to me and I will help thee. This is a plank thrown out after shipwreck, and greatly magnifies not only the power of God, that he can help when things are at the worst, can help those that cannot help themselves; but the riches of his grace, that he will help those that have destroyed themselves, and therefore might justly be left to perish; that he will

will help those that had long refused his help. Dr Pocock gives a different reading and sense of this verse. *O Israel, this has destroyed thee, that in me is thy help.* Presuming upon God and his favour has emboldened thee in those wicked ways, which have been thy ruin.

Now in the rest of these verses we may see,

1. How Israel destroyed themselves. It is said, *ver. 16.* They rebelled against their God, revolted from their allegiance to him, entered into a confederacy with his enemies, and took up arms against him; and this was the thing that ruined them, for never any hardened themselves against God and prospered. Note, Those that rebel against their God destroy themselves, for they make him their enemy for whom they are an unequal match.

(1.) They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and so they destroy themselves; they are doing that every day which will be remembered against them another day. *Ver. 12.* The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up, and his sin is hid; i.e. God took notice of it, kept it upon record, and will produce it against him, and reckon with him for it afterwards. Their former sins contributed to their present destruction; for they were laid up in store with God. *Deut. xxxii. 34, 35.* Job xiv. 17. It is laid up in safety, and will not be forgotten, nor the evidence against him lost; but it is laid up in secret, it is hid, the sinner himself is not aware of it. It is bound up in God's omniscience, in the sinner's own conscience. Note, The sin of sinners is not forgotten till it is pardoned, but an exact account is kept of it, which will be opened in proper time.

(2.) They make no haste to repent and help themselves, when they are under divine rebukes; and therefore they are their own ruin, because they will not do what they should do towards their own salvation. *Ver. 13.* (1.) They are brought into trouble and distress by sin. *The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him;* they shall smart for sin, and so be made sensible of it; they shall be thrown into pangs and agonies by it, very sharp and severe, and yet like the pains of a woman in labour, hopeful and promising, and in order to deliverance; and by these, though God corrects him, yet he designs his good. He is chastened that he may not be destroyed. But (2.) They are not by these forwarded as they ought to be towards repentance and reformation, which would issue their sorrows in true joy: *He is an unwise son, for he should not stay long, as he doth, in the place of the breaking forth of children, but being brought to the birth, should struggle to get forth, lest he be stifled and still-born at last.* Were the child which the mother is in travail of, capable of understanding its own case, we should reckon it an unwise child that would chuse to stay long in the birth; for the captive exile hasteth to be loose, lest he die in the pit, *Isa. li. 14.* Note, Those may justly be reckoned their own destroyers, who defer and put off their repentance, by which alone they might help themselves. Those are in danger of miscarrying in conversion, that delay it, and will not put forth themselves to speed the work, and bring it to an issue.

(3.) Therefore he is destroyed, because he has done that which would be his certain ruin, and neglected that which would be his only relief. Here is a sad description of the desolation they are doomed to, *ver. 15, 16.* It is here taken for granted, that Ephraim is fruitful among his children, his name signifies fruitfulness. He is fruitful in respect of the plentiful products of his country, and the great numbers of its inhabitants; it was both a rich and a populous tribe, as was foretold concerning it; but sin turns this fruitful tribe into barrenness. *Joseph was a fruitful bough, but for sin it was blasted.* The instrument is an east wind, representing a foreign enemy that should invade it. It is called the wind of the Lord, not only because it shall be a very great and strong wind, but because it shall be sent by a divine direction; it shall come from the Lord, and do whatever he appoints, and see what effect it shall have upon that flourishing tribe, what desolations war shall make. (1.) Was it a rich tribe? the foreign enemy shall make it poor enough. This wind of the Lord shall come up from the wilderness, a freezing, blasting wind, and shall dry up the springs and fountains with which this tree is watered, shall exhaust the sources of its wealth; the invader shall waste the country, and so impoverish the husbandman; shall intercept trade and commerce, and so impoverish the merchant; and let not the great men, whose wealth lies in their rich furniture, think that they shall be exempted from the judgment; for he shall spoil the treasure of all pleasant vessels. See the folly of those that lay up their treasure on earth, that lay it up in pleasant vessels, vessels of desire, so the word is, on which they set their affections, and in which they place their comfort and satisfaction. This is treasure that may be spoiled, and that they may be spoiled of; it is what either moth or rust may corrupt, or what thieves and soldiers may steal and carry away; but wise and happy they who have laid up their treasure in heaven, and in the pleasant things of that world, which cannot be spoiled, which they cannot be stripped of; ever happy are they, and therefore truly wise. (2.) Was it a populous tribe, and numerous? the enemy shall depopulate it, and make its men few. *Samaria shall become desolate, without inhabitants.* (1.) Those shall be cut off that are the guard and joy of the present generation; the men that bear arms shall bear them to no purpose, for they shall fall by the sword, so

that there shall be none to make head against the fury of the conqueror, or to take care of the concerns either of the publick, or of private families. (2.) Those shall be cut off that are the seed and hope of the next generation, that should rise up in the places of those that fell by the sword; the whole nation must be rooted out, and therefore the infants shall be dashed in pieces, in the most cruel and barbarous manner; and which, if possible yet more inhumane, the women with child shall be ripped up. Thus shall the glory of Samaria flee away from the birth, and from the womb, *chap. ix. 11.—x. 14.* See instances of this cruelty, *2 Kings viii. 12.—xv. 16.* *Amos i. 13.*

2. Let us now see how God was the help of this self-destroying people, how he was their only help. *Ver. 10.* I will be thy king, to rule and save thee; though they had refused to be his subjects, and had rebelled against him, yet he would still be their king, and would not abandon them. The business and care of a good king is to keep his people not only from being ruined by foreign enemies, but from ruining themselves, and one another. Thus will God yet be Israel's king, as he was their king of old. Note, Our case would be sad indeed if God were not better to us than we are to ourselves.

1. God will be their king when they have no other king; he will protect and save them, when those are cut off and gone that should have been their protectors and saviours. *I will be He* (so *ver. 10.* may be read) *He that shall help thee; where is the king that may save thee in all thy cities?* that may go in and out before thee, and fight thy battles, when thy cities are invaded by a foreign power, and suppress the more dangerous quarrels of thy citizens among themselves? *Where are thy judges, that by administering publick justice should preserve the publick peace?* (for they are righteousness and peace that kiss each other) *Where are thy judges that thou hadst such a desire of, and such a dependence upon, of whom thou saidst, Give me a king and princes?* This refers to the foolish wicked desire, (1.) Which the whole nation had of a kingly government, being weary of the Theocracy or divine government which they had been under during the time of the judges, because it looked too mean for them; they rejected Samuel, and in him the Lord, when they said, *Give us a king like the nations, whereas the Lord was their king.* (2.) To the desire which the ten tribes had of a kingly government different from that of the house of David, because they thought that was too absolute, and bore too hard upon them, and they hoped to mend themselves by setting up Jeroboam. Both these are instances, (1.) Of mens improvidence for themselves, when they are uneasy with their present lot, they are fond of novelty, and think to mend themselves by a change, but they are commonly disappointed, and do not find that advantage by the alteration which they promised themselves. (2.) Of mens impiety towards God, in thinking to refine upon his appointments, and amend them: God gave Israel judges and prophets for their conduct, but they were weary of them, and cried, *Give us a king and princes.* God gave them the house of David, established it by a covenant of royalty; but they were soon weary of that too, and cried, *We have no part in David,* those destroy themselves that are not pleased with what God doth for them, but think they can do better for themselves. Well, in both these requests providence humoured them; gave them Saul first, and afterwards Jeroboam. And what the better were they for them? Saul was given in anger, given in thunder, *1 Sam. xiii. 18, 19.* and soon after was taken away in wrath upon mount Gilboa. The kingly government of the ten tribes was given in anger, not only against Solomon, for his defection, but against the ten tribes that desired it, for their discontent, and disaffection to the house of David; and God was now about to take that away in wrath, by the power of the king of Assyria. And then, *where is thy king?* He is gone, and thou shalt abide many days without a king, and without a prince, *chap. iii. 5.* shalt have none to save thee, none to rule thee. Note, 1. God often gives in anger what we sinfully and inordinately desire; gives it with a curse, and with it gives us up to our own hearts lusts. Thus he gave Israel quails. 2. What we inordinately desire we are commonly disappointed in, and it cannot save us, as we expected it should. 3. What God gives in anger, he takes away in wrath; what he gives because we did not desire it well, he takes away because we did not use it well. It is the happiness of the saints, that whether God gives or takes, it is all in love, and furnisheth them with matter for praise. To the pure all things are pure. It is the misery of the wicked, that whether God gives or takes, it is all in wrath; to them nothing is pure, nothing is comfortable.

2. God will do that for them which no other king could do if they had one. *Ver. 14.* I will ransom them from the power of the grave. Though Israel, according to the flesh, be abandoned to destruction, God has mercy in store for his spiritual Israel, in whom all the promises were to have their accomplishment, and this among the rest, for to them the apostle applies it, *1 Cor. xv. 55.* and particularly to the blessed resurrection of believers at the great day, yet not excluding their spiritual resurrection from the death of sin, to a holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine life. It is promised, (1.) That the captives shall be delivered, shall be ransomed from the power of the grave. Their deliverance shall be by ransom, and we know who it was that paid their ransom; and what the ransom was, for it was the Son of

of man that gave his life a ransom for many, Matth. xx. 28. It is he that thus redeemed them. Those that upon their repenting and believing are for the sake of Christ's righteousness acquitted from the guilt of sin, and saved from death and hell, which are the wages of sin, are those ransomed of the Lord, that shall, in the great day, be brought out of the grave in triumph, and it shall be as impossible for the bands of death to hold them, as it was to hold their Master. (2.) That the conqueror shall be destroyed; *O death, I will be thy plagues.* Jesus Christ was the plague and destruction of death and the grave, when by death he destroyed him that had the power of death, and when in his own resurrection he triumphed over the grave: but the complete destruction of them will be in the resurrection of believers at the great day, when death shall for ever be swallowed up in victory, and it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. But the word which we translate *I will*, may as well be rendered *ubi nunc?* *Where now is thy plague?* And so the apostle took it, *O death, where is thy plague, or sting, with which thou hast so long pestered the world? O grave, where is thy victory, or thy destruction, wherewith thou hast destroyed mankind?* Christ has abolished death, has broken the power of it, and altered the property of it, and so enabled us to triumph over it. This promise he has made, and it shall be made good to all that are his, for *repentance shall be hid from his eyes*, he will never recall this sentence passed on death and the grave, for he is not a man that he should repent. Thanks be to God therefore who giveth us the victory.

C H A P. XIV.

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters.

Those were generally made up of reproofs for sin, and threatenings of wrath, but this is made up of exhortations to repentance and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closeth, for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken, were designed to prepare and make way for these; he wounds that he may heal, the Spirit convinceth that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents, and some such there were in Israel, at this day, as bad as things were. We have here, (1.) Directions in repenting, what to do and what to say, ver. 1—3. (2.) Encouragement to repent taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners, ver. 4, 8. and the comforts he had treasured up for them, ver. 5—7. (3.) A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts, ver. 9.

1. **O** Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. 2. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. 3. Ashur shall not save us, we will not ride upon horses, neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, *Ye are our gods*: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

Here is, 1. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, ver. 1. it is directed to Israel, God's professing people; they are called to return. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church, as well as to heathen. Thou art Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude, and interest; thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary. Let Israel see, (1.) What work he has made for repentance. Thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Thou hast stumbled. So some read it, their idols were their stumbling blocks; thou art fallen from God into sin, fallen off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse. Note, Sin is a fall; and it concerns those that are fallen by sin, to get up again by repentance. (2.) What work he has to do in his repentance. Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou hast a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant whom thou hast an interest in. Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God to return to God; and so to do their first works; return to him from whom thou hast fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return even to the Lord; or, quite home to the Lord; do not only look to him, or take some steps towards him, but make a thorough work of it. The ancient Jews had a saying grounded on this, *repentance is a great thing, for it brings men quite up to the throne of glory.*

2. Necessary instructions given them how to repent. (1.) They must bethink themselves what to say to God, when they come to him. Take with you words. They are not required to bring sacrifices and offerings, but penitent prayers and supplications; the fruit of thy lips, yet not of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbins saith, they must be such words as proceed from what is spoken first in the inner man; the heart must dictate to the tongue. We must take good words with us, by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. Verba-

que praevisam rem non invita sequentur. Note, When we come to God we should consider what we have to say to him, for if we come without an errand, we are likely to go without answer, Ezra ix. 10. What shall we say? We must take with us words from the scripture, take them from the Spirit of grace and supplication, who teacheth us to cry, Abba, Father, and makes intercession in us. (2.) They must bethink themselves what to do. They must not only take with them words, but must turn to the Lord; inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

Now for their assistance herein, and encouragement, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say; sure we may hope to speed with God, when he himself has ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has indited it for us; and, no doubt, we shall speed if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us. They are,

1. *Petitioning words.* Two things we are here directed to petition for. (1.) To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord we must say to him, Lord, take away all iniquity. They were now smarting for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray not as Pharaoh, take away this death, but take away this sin. Note, When we are in affliction we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins, than for the removal of our trouble. Take away iniquity, lift it off as a burthen we are ready to sink under, or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over. Lord, take it away that it may not appear against us to our confusion and condemnation. Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own. When God pardons sin he pardons all, that great debt; and when we pray against sin we must pray against it all; and not except any. (2.) To be accepted as righteous in God's sight, receive us graciously. Let us have thy favour and love, and have thou respect to us and to our performances. Receive our prayer graciously; be well pleased with that good, which by thy grace we are enabled to do. Take good. So the word is; take it to bestow upon us. So the margin reads it; give good. This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity; for till iniquity is taken away, we have no reason to expect any good from God; but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good, removendo prohibens, by taking that out of the way which hindered. Give good; they do not say what good, but refer themselves to God, it is not good of the world's shewing, Psal. iv. 6. but good of God's giving. Give good, that good which we have forfeited, and which thou hast promised, and which the necessity of our case calls for. Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us in our returning to God. Give good, i. e. that good which will make us good, and keep us from returning to iniquity again.

2. *Promising words.* These also are put into their mouths, not to move God, or to oblige him to shew them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note, Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God, should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow:

(1.) *Thanksgiving*; pardon our sins and accept of us, so will we render the calves of our lips. The fruit of our lips, so the LXX, a word they used for burnt-offerings, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The apostle quotes this phrase, Heb. xiii. 15. and by the fruit of our lips understands the sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name. Note, Praise and thanksgiving is our spiritual sacrifice, and if it come from an upright heart shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock, Psal. lxix. 30, 31. And the sense of our pardon and acceptance with God, will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are received graciously may, and must render the calves of their lips. Poor returns for rich receivings, yet if sincere, more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

(2.) *Amendment of life.* They are taught to promise not only verbal acknowledgments, but a real reformation. And we are taught here, (1.) In our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it, if we do not put it away by forsaking it. (2.) To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sins as we ought to be in our confessions; because deceit lies in generals. (3.) To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves against our own iniquity, Psal. xviii. 23. The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is giving that glory to another which is due to God only; this they promise they will never do. (1.) By putting that confidence in creatures, which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad; Ashur, i. e. Assyria shall not save us. We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress, as we have done, chap. v. 13.—vii. 11.—viii. 9. we will not contract for it, chap. ii. 1. nor will we confide in it, or depend upon

upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be beholden to the Assyrians for help. They will not trust to their *warlike preparations at home*, especially not those which they were forbidden to multiply. *We will not ride upon horses*, i.e. we will not make court to Egypt, for thence they fetched their horses, *Deut. xvii. 6. Isa. xxx. 16.—xxx. 1, 3.* When our enemies invade us, we will depend upon our God to *succour our infantry*, and will be in no care to *remount our cavalry*. Or, we will not *post on horseback* for haste, from one creature to another to seek relief, but will take the *next way*, and the only sure way, by applying ourselves to God, *Isa. xx. 5.* Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only, for all the good we stand in need of. (2.) Nor will they do it by *paying* that homage to creatures, which is due to God only. *We will not say any more to the works of our hands, ye are our gods.* They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god, which is the *work of our hands*. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is in effect to say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods.

3. *Pleading words* are here put into their mouths, for *in thee the fatherless findeth mercy*. We must take our encouragement in prayer not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains in itself a *great truth*, that God takes special care of *fatherless children*, *Psal. lxxviii. 4, 5.* So he did in his law, *Exod. xxii. 22.* So he doth in his providence, *Psal. xxvii. 10.* It is God's prerogative to *help the helpless*; in him there is *mercy* for such, for they are proper objects of mercy; in him they *find it*, there it is laid up for them, and there they must *seek it*; *seek and ye shall find*. It comes in here as a *good plea*, for mercy and grace; and an encouraging one to their faith. (1.) They plead the distress of their state and condition. We are *fatherless*, orphans, destitute of help. Those may expect to find help in God, that are truly sensible of their helplessness in themselves, and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step towards comfort. If we have not yet boldness to call God *Father*, yet we look upon ourselves as *fatherless* without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet to be looked upon by him with compassion. (2.) They plead God's wonted loving kindness to such as were in that condition; with thee the fatherless not only *may find*, but *doth find*, and *shall find*, mercy. It is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in returning to God, that it is his glory to father the fatherless, and help the helpless.

4. ¶ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him. 5. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. 6. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon. 7. They that dwell under his shadow shall return, they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel; they seek God's face, and they shall not *seek in vain*; God will be sure to meet them in a way of mercy, who return to him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises; as he answered the angel with good words, and comfortable words, *Zech. i. 13.* If we take with us the foregoing words in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words, for our faith to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

1. Do they dread and deprecate God's displeasure, and therefore return to him? He assures them, that upon their submission his *anger is turned away from them*. This is laid as the ground of all the other favours here promised. I will do so and so, for mine *anger is turned away*, and thereby a door is opened for all good to flow to them, *Isa. xii. 1.* Note, Tho' God is justly and greatly angry with sinners, yet he is not implacable in his anger; it may be turned away, it shall be turned away from those that turn away from their iniquity. God will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to him and to his whole will.

2. Do they pray for the *taking away of iniquity*? He assures them that he will *heal their backslidings*, so he promised *Jer. iii. 22.* Note, Tho' backslidings from God are the dangerous diseases and wounds of the soul, yet they are not incurable, for God has graciously promised, that if backsliding sinners will apply themselves to him as their physician, and comply with his methods, he will heal their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their backslidings by pardoning mercy, and their bent to backslide by renewing grace. Their iniquity shall not be their ruin.

No. LXXIV.

3. Do they pray that God will receive them graciously? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, *I will love them freely*. God had *hated* them while they went on in sin, *chap. ix. 15.* But now they return and repent, he *loves* them; not only ceaseth to be angry with them, but takes a *complacency* in them, and designs their good. He *loves them freely*; with an *absolute entire* love, so some; so that there are no remains of his former displeasure; with a *liberal bountiful* love, so others; he will be open-handed in his love to them, and will think nothing too much to bestow upon them, or to do for them. Or, with a *cheerful, willing* love; he will love them without reluctance or renitency. He will not say in the day of thy repentance, *how shall I receive thee again?* as he said in the day of thine apostasy, *how shall I give thee up?* Or, with an *unmerited, preventing* love. Whom God loves he loves *freely*, not because they deserve it, but of his own good pleasure. He loves, because he will love, *Deut. vii. 7, 8.*

4. Do they pray that God will *give good*? will make them good? In answer to that, behold it is promised, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, ver. 5. Observe,

1. What shall be the favour God will bestow upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob, *God give thee the dew of heaven*, *Gen. xxvii. 28.* Nay, what they need God will not only give them, but he will himself be *that* to them, all that which they need; *I will be as the dew unto Israel*. This speaks *spiritual blessings in heavenly things*; and it follows upon the *healing of their backslidings*; for pardoning mercy is always accompanied with renewing grace. Note, To Israelites indeed God himself will be *as the dew*. He will *instruct* them, his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew, *Deut. xxxii. 2.* They shall know more and more of him, for he will come to them *as the rain*, *Hos. vi. 3.* He will refresh them with his comforts, so that their souls shall be as a *watered garden*, *Isa. lviii. 11.* He will be to true penitents *as the dew to Israel*, when they were in the wilderness, dew that had *manna* in it, *Exod. xvi. 14.* *Numb. xi. 9.* The graces of the Spirit are the hidden *manna*, hidden in the dew, God will give them bread from heaven, as he did to Israel in the dew; in abundance, *John i. 16.*

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour, which shall be produced in them; the *grace* thus freely bestowed on them *shall not be in vain*. Those souls, those Israelites, to whom God is *as the dew*, on whom his grace distils,

1. They shall be *growing*. The bad being by the grace of God made *good*, they shall by the same grace be made *better*; for grace, wherever it is true, is growing. (1.) They shall grow *upwards*, and be more *flourishing*, shall grow *as the lily*; or, as some read it, shall *blossom as the rose*. The growth of the lily, as that of all *bulbous* roots is very *quick and speedy*; the root of the lily seems lost in the ground all winter, but when it is refreshed with the dews of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so the grace of God improves young converts sometimes *very fast*. The lily when it is come to its height is a lovely flower, *Matth. vi. 24.* so grace is the *comeliness* of the soul, *Ezek. xvi. 14.* It is the *beauty of holiness* that is produced by the *dew of the morning*, *Psal. cx. 3.* (2.) They shall grow *downwards*, and be more *firm*. The lily indeed grows *fast*, and grows *sine*, but it soon fades, and is easily plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to Israel, that with the flower of the lily, he shall have the root of the cedar; he shall *cast forth his roots as Lebanon*; as the *trees of Lebanon*, which having taken deep root cannot be plucked up, *Amos ix. 15.* Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root; which is out of sight. The more we depend upon Christ, and draw sap and virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a principle, and the more steadfast and resolved we are in it, the more we *cast forth our roots*. (3.) They shall grow *round about*, ver. 6. *His branches shall spread* on all sides. And ver. 7. he shall grow *as the vine*, whose branches extend furthest of any tree. Joseph was to be a *fruitful bough*, *Gen. xlix. 22.* When many are added to the church from without, when a hopeful generation riseth up, then Israel's *branches spread*. When particular believers abound in good works, and increase in the knowledge of God, and in every good gift, then their *branches* may be said to spread. The *inward man renewed day by day*.

2. They shall be *graceful and acceptable*, both to God and man. Grace is an amiable thing, and makes those that have it truly amiable. They are here compared to such trees as are pleasant (1.) To the sight. *His beauty shall be as the olive-tree*, which is always green; *the Lord called thy name a green olive-tree*, *Jer. xi. 6.* Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is and shall be ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when those that believe with the heart make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation, then their *beauty* is as the *olive-tree*, *Psal. lii. 8.* It is a promise to the trees of righteousness that their *leaf shall not wither*. (2.) To the smell. *His smell shall be as Lebanon*, ver. 6. and his *scent as the wine of Lebanon*, ver. 7. This was the praise of their father Jacob, *the smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed*, *Gen. xxvii. 27.* The church is compared to a *garden of spices*, *Cant. iv. 12, 14.* which *all her garments smell of*. True believers are *acceptable to God*, and *approved of men*; God *smells a sweet savour* from their *spiritual sacrifices*, *Gen. viii. 21.* and they are *accepted of the multitude*

multitude of their brethren. Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name; makes it like precious ointment, *Ecccl. vii. 1.* The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. So the margin reads it; not only their *reviving* comforts now, but their *surviving* honours when they are gone, shall be as the *wine of Lebanon*, that has a delicate flavour. Flourishing churches have *their faith spoken of throughout the world*, *Rom. i. 8.* and *leave their name to be remembered*, *Psal. xlv. 17.* and the memory of flourishing saints is *blest*, and shall be so; as theirs who by faith obtained a good report.

3. They shall be *fruitful and useful*. The church is compared here to the *vine*, and the *olive*, that bring forth useful fruits; to the honour of God and man. Nay, the very *shadow* of the church shall be agreeable, *ver. 7.* *They that dwell under his shadow shall return.* Under God's shadow, so some; under the shadow of the Messiah, so the Chaldee, believers *dwell under God's shadow*, *Psal. xci. 1.* and there they are and may be safe and easy; but it is rather, *under the shadow of Israel*, under the shadow of the church. Note, God's promises pertain to those and those only, that *dwell under the church's shadow*, that attend on God's ordinances, and adhere to his people. Not that flee to that shadow only for shelter in a hot gleam, but that *dwell under it*, *Psal. xxvii. 4.* We may apply it to particular believers; when a man is effectually brought home to God, all that *dwell under his shadow* fare the better for it; children, servants, subjects, friends, *this day is salvation come to this house*. They that dwell under the shadow of this church shall *return*, their drooping spirits shall *return*, and they shall be *refreshed*, and comforted; he *restoreth my soul*, *Psal. xxiii. 3.* *They shall revive as the corn*, which when it is sown dies first, and then revives and *brings forth much fruit*, *John xii. 24.* It is promised that God's people shall be blessings to the world as *corn and wine* are. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

8. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir-tree, from me is thy fruit found.
9. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter,

1. Concerning Ephraim; he is spoken of, and spoken to, *ver. 8.*

(1.) Here is his repentance and reformation. *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him, why he should renounce idolatry, *O Ephraim, what to me and idols? What concord or agreement can there be between me and idols? What communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial,* *2 Cor. vi. 14, 15.* therefore thou must break off thy league with them, if thou wilt come into covenant with me. As we read it, God promised to bring Ephraim, and keep him to this, *Ephraim shall say, God will put it into his heart to say it, What have I to do any more with idols?* he had promised, *ver. 3.* not to say any more to the works of his hands, *ye are my gods*; but God's promises to us are much more our security, and our strength for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here *surety for his servant to good*, will put it into his heart, and into his mouth. And whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us; Ephraim had solemnly engaged not to call his idols *his gods*; but God here engageth further for him, That he shall resolve to have *no more to do with them*; he shall *abolish* them, he shall *abandon* them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary not only that in our lives we be turned *from sin*, but that in our hearts we be turned *against sin*. See here, (1.) The power of divine grace; Ephraim had been joined to idols, *chap. iv. 17.* was so fond of them, that one would have thought he could never have fallen out with them, and yet God will work such a change in him, that he shall *loath* them as much as ever he *loved* them. (2.) See the benefit of *sanctified afflictions*. Ephraim had smarted for his idolatry, it had brought one judgment after another upon him, and this at length is the fruit, even the *taking away of his sin*, *Isa. xxvii. 9.* (3.) See the nature of repentance, it is a firm and fixed resolution to have *no more to do with sin*; this is the language of a penitent; I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin, but I have had enough of it, I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again; no not with the occasions of it. Thou shalt say to thine idol, *Get thee hence*, *Isa. xxx. 32.* shalt say to the tempter, *Get thee behind me, Satan.*

(2.) Here is the gracious notice God is pleased to take of it. *I have heard him, and observed him; I have heard, and will look upon him.* So some read it. Note, The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflexions and resolutions of re-

turning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he has no pleasure in their ruin; *He looks upon men*, *Job xxxiii. 27.* *hearkens and hears*, *Jer. viii. 6.* And if there be any disposition to repent he is well pleased with it; when *Ephraim bemoans himself* before God, he is a *dear son*, he is a *pleasant child*, *Jer. xxxi. 20.* He meets penitents with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God observed Ephraim to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for this profession of repentance that he made; and whether he would continue in this good mind. He observed him, to do him good, and comfort him, according to the exigencies of his case.

(3.) Here is the mercy God designed for him, in order to his comfort, and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him; before Israel was compared to a tree, now God compares himself to one. He will be to his people, (1.) As the branches of a tree. *I am like a green fir-tree*, and will be so to thee. The fir-trees in those countries were exceeding large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain; God will be to all true converts both a delight and a defence; under his protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety, and dwell at ease. He will be either a *sun and a shield*, or a *shade and shield*, according as their case requires. They shall sit down *under his shadow with delight*, *Cant. ii. 3.* he will be so all weathers, *Isa. iv. 6.* (2.) As the root of a tree. *From me is thy fruit found.* Which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us, to him we owe all our comforts. Or, of the fruit brought forth by us, from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we bring forth, all the praise of them is owing to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

2. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book, *ver. 9.* *Who is wise, and he shall understand these things?* Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude the sermons he preached, with these words, and now he closeth the whole book with them, in which he had committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1. The character of those that do profit by the truths here delivered. *Who is wise and prudent?* He shall *understand these things*, he shall *know them*; those that set themselves to *understand* and *know* these things, thereby make it to appear that they are truly *wise and prudent*; and will thereby be made more so; and if any do not *understand* and *know* them, it is because they are *foolish and unwise*. Those that are *wise* in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, they are most likely to *know* and *understand* both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him*, *John vii. 17.* *Who is wise?* This intimates a desire that those who read and hear these things would *understand* them; *O that they were wise!* And a complaint that few were so, *Who has believed our report?*

2. The excellency of the things concerning which we are here instructed. *The ways of the Lord are right*; and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to *know* and *understand* them. The way of God's precepts in which he requires us to walk is *right*, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and equity, and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence in which he walks towards us are all *right*; no fault is to be found with any thing that God doth, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, they are all *right*; however they may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all; his *ways are equal*.

3. The different use which men make of them.

1. The *right ways* of God to those that are good, are, and will be, a favour of life unto life; *The just shall walk in them*, they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and in his providences, and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God, both in his word and in his works, and shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. *The just shall walk in those ways* towards their great end, and shall not come short of it.

2. The right ways of God to those that are wicked will be a favour of death unto death. *The transgressors shall fall* not only in their own wrong ways, but even *in the right ways of the Lord*. Christ that is a foundation stone to some, is to others a *stone of stumbling*, and a *rock of offence*. That which was *ordained to life*, through their abuse of it becomes death to them. God's providences being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin, and contribute to their ruin. God's discovery of himself both in the judgments of his mouth, and in the judgments of his hand, is to us according as we are affected under it, *recipitur ad modum recipientis*, the same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors those certainly have the most dangerous, fatal falls, that fall *in the ways of God*, that split on the rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. Let the *sinners in Zion* be afraid of this.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f J O E L.

WE are altogether uncertain concerning the time when this prophet prophesied; it is probable it was about the same time that Amos prophesied, not for the reason that the rabbins give, because Amos begins his prophecy with that wherewith Joel concludes his; The Lord shall roar out of Zion; but for the reason Dr Lightfoot gives, because he speaks of the same judgments of locusts, and drought, and fire, that Amos laments, which is an intimation that they appeared about the same time, Amos in Israel, and Joel in Judah; Hosea and Obadiah prophesied about the same time; and it appears that Amos prophesied in the days of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, Amos vii. 10. God sent variety of prophets that they might strengthen the hands one of another, and out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word might be established. In this prophecy, (1.) The desolation made by hosts of noxious insects is described, chap. i. and part of chap. ii. (2.) The people are hereupon called to repentance, chap. ii. (3.) Promises are made of the return of mercy upon their repentance, chap. ii. and promises of the pouring out the Spirit in the latter days. (4.) The cause of God's people is pleaded against their enemies, whom God would in due time reckon with, chap. iii. and glorious things are spoken of the gospel Jerusalem, and of the prosperity and perpetuity of it.

C H A P. I.

This chapter is the description of a lamentable devastation made of the country of Judah by locusts and caterpillars; some think the prophet speaks of it as a thing to come, and gives warning of it before-hand, as usually the prophets did of judgments coming. Others think it was now present, and his business is to affect the people with it, and awaken them by it to repentance. (1.) It is spoken of as a judgment which there was no precedent of in former ages, ver. 1—7. (2.) All sorts of people sharing in the calamity are called upon to lament it, ver. 8—13. (3.) They are directed to look up to God in their lamentations, and to humble themselves before him, ver. 14—20.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Joel the son of Pethuel. 2. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land: hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers? 3. Tell ye your children of it, and let your

children tell their children, and their children another generation. 4. That which the palmer-worm hath left, hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left, hath the canker-worm eaten; and that which the canker-worm hath left, hath the caterpillar eaten. 5. Awake ye drunkards, and weep, and howl all ye drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it is cut off from your mouth. 6. For a nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion. 7. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig-tree: he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away, the branches thereof are made white.

It is a foolish fancy which some of the Jews have, that this Joel the prophet was the same with that Joel that was the son of Samuel, 1 Sam. viii. 2. yet one of their rabbins very gravely undertakes to shew why Samuel is here called Pethuel. This Joel was long after that. He here speaks of a sad and sore judgment which was now brought, or to be brought, upon Judah for their sins. Observe,

1. The greatness of the judgment; expressed here in two things. (1.) It was such as could not be paralleled in the ages that were past; in history, or in the memory of any living, *ver. 2.* The *old men* are appealed to, who could remember what had happened long ago; nay, and *all the inhabitants of the land* are called on to testify, if they could any of them remember the like. Let them go further than any man's memory, and *prepare themselves for the search of their fathers*, (*Job viii. 8.*) and they would not find an account of the like in any record. Note, Those that outdo their predecessors in sin, may justly expect to fall under greater and forer judgments than any their predecessors knew. (2.) It was such as would not be forgotten in the ages to come, *ver. 3.* *Tell ye your children of it*, let them know what dismal tokens of the wrath of God you have been under, that they may take warning, and may learn obedience by the things which you have suffered, for it is designed for warning to them also. Yea, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation; let them tell it not only as a strange thing, which may serve for *matter of talk*, as such uncommon accidents are recorded in our almanacks, it is so long since the plague, and fire, so long since the great frost, and the great wind, but let them tell it to *teach their children* to stand in awe of God and of his judgments, and to tremble before him. Note, We ought to transmit to posterity the memorial of God's judgments as well as of his mercies.

2. The judgment itself; it is an invasion of the country of Judea by a great army. Many interpreters both ancient and modern, understand it of armies of men; the forces of the Assyrians, that, under Sennacherib, *took all the fenced cities of Judah*, and then, no doubt, made havock of the country, and destroyed the products of it; nay, some make the four sorts of animals here named, *ver. 4.* to signify the four monarchies, which in their turns were oppressive to the people of the Jews, one destroying what had escaped the fury of the other. Many of the Jewish expositors think it is a parabolical expression of the coming of enemies, and their multitude to lay all waste. So the Chaldee paraphrast mentions these animals here, *ver. 4.* But afterwards, *chap. ii. 25.* puts instead of them, *Nations, peoples, tongues, languages, potentates, and revenging kingdoms.* But it seems much rather to be understood literally of armies of insects coming upon the land, and eating up the fruits of it. Locusts were one of the plagues of Egypt, of them it is said there never were any like them, nor should be, *Exod. x. 14.* None such as those in Egypt, none such as these in Judah; none like those locusts for bigness, none like these for multitude, and the mischief they did: that lasted but for a few days, this here seems to have continued for four years successively, as some think, because here are four sorts of insects mentioned, *ver. 4.* one destroying what the other left. But others think they came all in one year. We are not told in the history of the Old Testament when this happened, but we are sure no word of God fell to the ground; and tho' a devastation by these insects is primarily intended here, yet it is expressed in such language as is very applicable to the destruction of the country by a foreign enemy invading it, because if the people were not humbled and reformed by that lesser judgment which devoured the land, God would send this greater upon them, which would devour the inhabitants; and by the description of that, they are bid to take it for a warning. If this nation of worms doth not *reduce* them, another nation shall come to *rain* them.

Observe, (1.) What these animals are that are sent against them, *locusts* and *caterpillars*, *palmer-worms*, and *canker-worms*, *ver. 4.* We cannot now describe how these differed one from another, they were all little insects, any one of them despicable, and which a man might easily crush with his foot or with his finger; but when they came in vast swarms or shoals of them, they were very formidable, and eat up all before them. Note, God is Lord of hosts, has all creatures at his command, and when he pleaseth can humble and mortify a proud and rebellious people by the weakest and most contemptible creatures. Man is said to be a *worm*, and by this it appears he is *less than a worm*, for, when God pleaseth, worms are *too hard* for him, plunder his country, eat up that for which he laboured, destroy the forage, and cut off the subsistence of a potent nation. The weaker the instrument is that God employs, the more is his power magnified. (2.) What force and fury they came with. They are here called a *nation*, *ver. 6.* because they are embodied, and act by consent, and as it were with a common design, for tho' *the locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands*, *Prov. xxx. 27.* and it is there mentioned as an instance of their *wisdom*. It is prudence for those that are weak severally, to unite and act jointly. They are *strong*, for they are *without number*. The *small dust of the balance* is light and easily blown away, but a heap of dust is *weighty*; so a worm can do little, (yet one worm seemed to wither Jonah's gourd) but numbers of them can do wonders. They are said to have the *teeth of a lion*, of a *great lion*, because of the great and terrible execution they do. Note, Locusts become as lions, when they come armed with a divine commission. We read of the locusts out of the bottomless pit, that *their teeth were as the teeth of lions*, *Rev. ix. 8.* (3.) What mischief they do. They *eat up* all before them, *ver. 4.* what

one leaves, the other devours; they destroy not only the grass and corn, but the trees, *ver. 7.* *The vine is laid waste.* These vermin eat the leaves which should be a shelter to the fruit while it ripens, and so that also perisheth and cometh to nothing. They eat the very bark of the *fig-tree*, and so kill it. Thus the *fig-tree doth not blossom*, nor is there fruit in the vine.

3. A call to the *drunkards* to lament this judgment, *ver. 5.* *Awake and weep, all ye drinkers of wine.* This intimates, (1.) That they should suffer very sensibly by this calamity, it should touch them in a tender part, the *new wine* which they loved so well should be *cut off from their mouth*. Note, It is just with God to take away those comforts which are abused to luxury and excess, to *recover the corn and wine* which is *prepared for Baal*, which is made the food and fuel of a base lust. And to them judgments of that kind are most grievous. The more men place their happiness in the gratifications of sense, the more pressing temporal afflictions are upon them. The *drinkers of water* needed not to care when the vine was laid waste, they could live as well without it as they had done, it was no trouble to the Nazarites; but the *drinkers of wine* will *weep and howl*. The more delights we make necessary to our satisfaction, the more we expose ourselves to trouble and disappointment. (2.) It intimates that they had been very senseless and stupid under the former tokens of God's displeasure; and therefore they are here called to *awake and weep*. They that will not be roused out of their security by the word of God, shall be roused by his rod; that will not be startled by judgments at a distance, shall be themselves arrested by them; and when they are going to take of the forbidden fruit, a prohibition of another nature shall come *between the cup and the lip*, and *cut off the wine from their mouth*.

8. ¶ Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth. 9. The meat-offering, and the drink-offering, is cut off from the house of the LORD; the priests the LORDS ministers mourn. 10. The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. 11. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen, howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley; because the harvest of the field is perished. 12. The vine is dried up, and the fig-tree languisheth, the pomegranate-tree, the palm-tree also, and the apple-tree, even all the trees of the field are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men. 13. Gird yourselves, and lament, ye priests: howl, ye ministers of the altar: come, lie all night in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: for the meat-offering and the drink-offering is withholden from the house of your God.

The judgment is here described as very *lamentable*, and such as all sorts of people should share in; it shall not only rob the drunkards of their pleasure; if that were the worst of it, it might be the better born, but it shall deprive others of their necessary subsistence, who are therefore called to lament, *ver. 8.* as a virgin laments the death of her lover, to whom she was espoused, but not completely married, yet so as that he was in effect *her husband*; or, as a *young woman* lately married from whom the husband of her youth, her young husband, or the husband to whom she was married when she was young, is suddenly taken away by death. Betwixt a new-married couple that are young, that married for love, and that are every way amiable and agreeable to each other, there is great fondness, and consequently great grief, if either be taken away. Such lamentation shall there be for the loss of their corn and wine. Note, The more we are *wedded* to our creature-comforts, the harder it is to part with them. See that parallel place, *Isa. xxxii. 10, 11, 12.*

Two sorts of people are here brought in, as concerned to lament this devastation, countrymen, and clergymen.

1. Let the husbandmen and vine-dressers lament, *ver. 11.* Let them be *ashamed* of the care and pains they have taken about their vineyards, for it will be all labour lost, and they shall gain no advantage by it; they shall see the fruit of their labour eaten up before their eyes, and shall not be able to save any of it. Note, Those who labour only for the meat that perisheth, will sooner or later be ashamed of their labour. The *vine-dressers* will then express their extreme grief by *howling*, when they see their vineyards stripped of leaves and fruit, and the vines withered, so that nothing is to be had or hoped for, from them, wherewith they might pay their rent, and maintain their families. The destruction is particularly described here; the *field is laid waste*, *ver. 10.* all is consumed that it produced, *the land mourns*, the ground has a melancholy aspect, and looks ruefully; all the inhabitants of the land are in tears for what they have lost, are in fears of perishing for want, *Isa. xxiv. 4.* *Jer. iv. 48.* The *corn*, the bread corn, which is the staff of life, is *wasted*; the *new wine*, which should be brought into the cellars for recruits, when the old is drunk, is *dried up*, is *ashamed* of having promised so fair what it is not now able to perform: the oil *languisheth* or is *diminished*, because (as the Chaldee renders it) *the olives are fallen*.

fallen off. The people were not thankful to God as they should have been for the *bread that strengthens man's heart*, the *wine that makes glad the heart*, and the *oil that makes the face to shine*, Psal. cxliv. 14, 15. And therefore they are justly brought to lament the loss and want of them; of all the products of the earth which God had given them either for necessity, or for delight. This is repeated, ver. 11, 12. The *wheat and barley*, the two principal grains bread was then made of, *wheat* for the rich, and of *barley* for the poor; so that rich and poor meet together in the calamity. The trees are destroyed, not only the *vine and the fig-tree*, as before, ver. 7. which were more useful; and necessary, but other trees also that were for delight; the *pomegranate*, *palm-tree*, and *apple-tree*, yea all the *trees of the field*, as well as those of the orchard; timber-trees as well as fruit-trees. In short, *all the harvest of the field is perished*, ver. 11. And by this means *joy is withered away from the children of men*, ver. 11. the *joy of harvest*, which is used to express great and general joy, is come to nothing, is turned into shame, is turned into lamentation. Note, The perishing of the harvest is the withering of the joy of the *children of men*. Those that place their happiness in the delights of sense, when they are deprived of them, or any way disturbed in the enjoyment of them, lose all their joy; whereas the *children of God*, that look upon the pleasures of sense with a holy indifferency and contempt, and know what it is to make God their hearts delight, can rejoice in him as the *God of their salvation*, even when the *fig-tree doth not blossom*; spiritual joy is so far from withering then, that it flourisheth more than ever, *Hab. iii. 17, 18*.

Let us see here, (1.) What perishing, uncertain things all our creature-comforts are; we can never be sure of the continuance of them. Here the heavens had given their rains in due season, the earth had yielded her strength, and when the appointed weeks of harvest were at hand, they saw no reason to doubt but that they should have a very plentiful crop; yet then they are invaded by these unthought-of enemies, that lay all waste, and not by fire and sword. It is our wisdom not to *lay up our treasure* in these things, which are liable to so many ill accidents. (2.) See what need we have to live in a continual dependence upon God and his providence, for our own hands are not sufficient for us. When we see the *full corn in the ear*, and think we are sure of it; nay, when we have *brought it home*, if he *blow upon it*, nay if he do not bless it, we are not likely to have any good of it. (3.) See what ruinous work sin makes. A paradise is turned into a wilderness, a fruitful land, the most *fruitful land upon earth*, into barrenness, for the *iniquity of them that dwell therein*.

2. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, lament, for they share deeply in the calamity. *Gird your selves with sackcloth*, ver. 13. nay, they *do mourn*, ver. 9. Observe, the priests are called the *ministers of the altar*, for on that they attended, and the *ministers of the Lord*, of *my God*, saith the prophet; for in attending on the altar they served him, did his work, and did him honour. Note, They that are employed in holy things, are therein God's ministers, and on him they attend. The ministers of the altar used to rejoice before the Lord, and spend their time very much in singing, but now they must *lament and howl*; for the *meat-offering and drink-offering was cut off from the house of the Lord*, ver. 9. and the same again, ver. 13. *from the house of your God*. He is your God in a particular manner, you are in a nearer relation to him than other Israelites are, and therefore it is expected you should be more concerned than others for that which is a hindrance to the service of his sanctuary. It is intimated, (1.) That the people, as long as they had the fruits of the earth brought in in their season, presented to the Lord his dues out of them; and brought the offerings to the altar, and tithes to them that served at the altar. Note, A people may be filling up the measure of their iniquity apace, and yet may keep up a course of external performances in religion. (2.) That when the meat and drink failed, the *meat-offering and drink-offering* failed of course; and this was the forest instance of the calamity. Note, As far as any publick trouble is an obstruction to the course of religion, it is to be upon that account more than any other sadly lamented, especially by the priests, the Lord's ministers. As far as poverty occasions the decay of piety, and the neglect of divine offices, and starves the cause of religion among a people, it is indeed a sore judgment. When the famine prevailed, God could not have his sacrifices, nor could the priests have their maintenance; and therefore let *the Lord's ministers mourn*.

14. ¶ Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders, and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the LORD your God, and cry unto the LORD, 15. Alas for the day: for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come. 16. Is not the meat cut off before our eyes, yea, joy and gladness from the house of our God? 17. The seed is rotten under their clods, the garners are laid desolate, the barns are broken down; for the corn is withered. 18. How do the beasts groan? the herds of cattle are perplexed, be-

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cause they have no pasture; yea, the flocks of sheep are made desolate. 19. O LORD, to thee will I cry: for the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness, and the flame hath burnt all the trees of the field. 20. The beasts of the field cry also unto thee: for the rivers of waters are dried up, and the fire hath devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

We have observed abundance of tears shed for the destruction of the fruits of the earth by the locusts; now here we have those tears turned into the right chanel, that of repentance and humiliation before God; the judgment was very heavy, and here they are directed to own the hand of God in it, his *mighty hand*, and to *humble themselves* under it. Here is,

1. A proclamation issued out for a general fast. The priests are ordered to appoint one; they must not only mourn themselves, but they must call upon others to mourn too. *Sanctify ye a fast*, i. e. Let some time be set apart from all worldly business, to be spent in the exercises of religion, in the expressions of repentance, and other extraordinary instances of devotion. Note, Under publick judgments there ought to be publick humiliations; for by them the *Lord God calls to weeping and mourning*. With all the marks of sorrow and shame, sin must be confessed and bewailed, the righteousness of God must be acknowledged, and his favour implored. Observe what is to be done by a nation at such a time. (1.) A day is to be appointed for this purpose, a *day of restraint*, so the margin reads it. A day in which people must be restrained from their other ordinary occasions, that they may the more closely attend God's service; and from all bodily refreshments; for, (2.) It must be a *fast*, a religious abstaining from meat and drink, farther than is of absolute necessity. The king of Nineveh appointed a fast, in which they were to *taste nothing*, Jon. iii. 7. Hereby we own our selves unworthy of our necessary food, and that we have forfeited it, and deserve to be wholly deprived of it; we punish our selves, and mortify the body which has been the occasion of sin; we keep it in a frame fit to serve the soul in serving God; and by the appetite's craving food, the desires of the soul towards that which is better than life, and all the supports of it, are excited. This was in a special manner seasonable now God was depriving them of their *meat and drink*; for hereby they *accommodate themselves* to the affliction they were under. When God saith, *you shall fast*, it is time to say, *we will fast*. (3.) There must be a solemn assembly. The *elders* and the *people*, magistrates and subjects, must be *gathered together*; even *all the inhabitants of the land*, that God might be honoured by their publick humiliations, that they might thereby take the more shame to themselves, and that they might excite and stir up one another to the religious duties of the day: all had contributed to the national guilt, all shared in the national calamity, and therefore they must all join in the professions of repentance. (4.) They must come together in the temple, *the house of the Lord your God*, because that was the house of prayer, and there they might hope to meet with God, because it was the place which he had *chosen to put his name there*; there they might hope to speed, because it was a type of Christ and his mediation. Thus they interested themselves in Solomon's prayer for the acceptance of all the requests that should be put up in or towards this house; in which their present case was particularly mentioned, 1 *Kings* viii. 37. *If there be locust, if there be caterpillar*. (5.) They must *sanctify* this fast, must observe it in a *religious* manner, with sincere devotion. What is a fast worth, if it be not *sanctified*? (6.) They must *cry unto the Lord*. To him they must make their complaint, and offer up their supplication to him. When we cry in our affliction, we must *cry to the Lord*; this is *fasting to him*, *Zech. vii. 5*.

2. Divers considerations suggested to induce them to proclaim this fast, and to observe it strictly.

1. God was beginning a controversy with them. It was time to *cry unto the Lord*, for *the day of the Lord is at hand*, ver. 15. Either they mean the continuance and consequences of this present judgment which they now saw but breaking in upon them, or some greater judgments which this was but a preface to. However it be, this they are taught to make the matter of their lamentation; *Alas, for the day, the day of the Lord is at hand*. Therefore *cry to God*: For, (1.) The day of his judgment is very near, it is *at hand*; it *will not slumber*, and therefore you *should not*. It is time to fast and pray, for you have but a little time to turn you in. (2.) It will be very terrible, there is no escaping it, no resisting it, *as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come*. See *Isa. xlii. 6*. It is not a correction, but a *destruction*; and it comes from the hand not of a weak creature, but of the *Almighty*, and *who knows* (nay who doth not know) *the power of his anger*? Whither should we go with our cries, but to him from whom the judgment we dread comes! There is no fleeing from him, but by fleeing to him; no escaping *destruction from the Almighty*, but by making our submission and supplication to the Almighty; this is *taking hold on his strength, that we may make peace*, *Isa. xxvii. 5*.

2. They saw themselves already under the tokens of his displeasure. It is time to fast and pray, for their distress was very great, *ver. 16.* (1.) Let them look into their own houses, and there was no plenty there as used to be: Those who kept a good table were now obliged to retrench; *Is not the meat cut off before our eyes?* We see it wherever we go. Note, Though it is common for the heart not to rue what the eye sees not, yet that heart is hard indeed which trembles not, and humbles not itself when God's judgments are *before the eyes.* If when God's hand is lifted up, men will not see; when his hand is laid on, they shall see. Is not the meat many a time cut off before our eyes? Let us then labour for that spiritual meat which is not before our eyes, and which cannot be cut off. (2.) Let them look into God's house, and see the effects of the judgment there; joy and gladness were cut off from the house of God. Note, The house of our God is the proper place of joy and gladness; when David goes to the altar of God, it is to God my exceeding joy; but when joy and gladness is cut off from God's house, either by the corruption of holy things, or the persecution of holy persons; when serious godliness decays, and love waxes cold, then it is time to cry to the Lord, time to cry *alas.*

The prophet returns to describe the grievousness of the calamity in several particulars of it. Corn and cattle are husbandmen's staple commodities; now here he is deprived of both these. (1.) The caterpillars have devoured the corn, *ver. 17.* The garners, which they used to fill with corn, are laid desolate, and the barns broken down, because the corn is withered, and the owners think it not worth while to be at the charge of repairing them when they have nothing to put in them, nor likely to have any; for the seed is rotten under the clods, either through too much rain, or (which was the more common case in Canaan) for want of rain, or perhaps some insects under ground eat it up. When one crop fails, the husbandman hopes the next may make it up; but here they despair of that, the seedness being as bad as the harvest. (2.) The cattle perish too for want of grass, *ver. 18.* How do the beasts groan? This the prophet takes notice of, that the people might be affected with it, and lay to heart the judgment. The groans of the cattle should soften their hard and impenitent hearts. The herds of cattle, the large cattle, (black cattle we call them) they are perplexed, nay even the flocks of sheep, who will live upon a common, and take up with very short grass, yet even they are made desolate. See here the inferior creatures suffer for our transgression, and groan under the double burthen of being serviceable to the sin of man, and subject to the curse of God for it; *curst is the ground for thy sake.*

3. The prophet stirs them up to cry to God with the considerations of the examples given them for it.

(1.) His own example, *ver. 19.* O Lord, to thee will I cry. He would not put them upon doing that which he would not resolve to do himself; nay, whether they would do it or no, he would. Note, If God's ministers cannot prevail to affect others with the discoveries of divine wrath, yet they ought to be themselves affected with them; if they cannot bring others to cry to God, yet they must themselves be much in prayer. In time of trouble, we must not only pray but cry, must be fervent and importunate in prayer; and to God from whom both the destruction is, and the salvation must be, ought our cry to be always directed. That which engaged him to cry to God, was not so much any personal affection, as the national calamity. The fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness; which seems to be meant of some parching scorching heat of the sun, which was as fire to the fruits of the earth, it consumed them all. Note, when God calls to contend by fire, it concerns those that have any interest in heaven to cry mightily to him for relief. See *Numb. xi. 2.* *Amos vii. 4.*

(2.) The example of the inferior creatures. The beasts of the field do not only groan, but they cry unto thee, *ver. 20.* They appeal to thy pity, according to their capacity, and as if tho' they are not capable of a rational and revealed religion, yet they had something of dependence upon God by natural instinct. At least, when they groan by reason of their calamity, he is pleased to interpret it as if they cried to him, much more will he put a favourable construction upon the groanings of his own children, tho' sometimes so feeble that they cannot be uttered, *Rom. viii. 26.* The beasts are here said to cry unto God, as from him the lions seek their meat, *Psal. civ. 21.* and the young ravens, *Job xxxviii. 41.* The complaints of the brute creatures here are for want of water. The rivers are dried up, through the excessive heat, and for want of grass, for the fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And what better are they than beasts, that never cry to God but for corn and wine, and complain of nothing but the want of the delights of sense? Yet their crying to God in those cases shames the stupidity of those, that cry not to God in any case.



CHAP. II.

In this chapter, we have (1.) A further description of that terrible desolation which should be made in the land of Judah by the locusts and caterpillars, *ver. 1—11.* (2.) A serious call to the people, when they are under this sore judgment to return and repent, and to fast and pray, and seek unto God for mercy, with directions how to do this aright, *ver. 12—17.* (3.) A promise that upon repentance God would remove the judgment, would repair the breaches made upon them by it, and restore unto them plenty of all good things, *ver. 18—27.* (4.) A prediction of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah in the world, by the pouring out of the Spirit in the latter days, *ver. 28—32.* Thus the beginning of this chapter is made terrible with the tokens of God's wrath, but the latter end of it made comfortable with the assurances of his favour, and it is in the way of repentance, that this blessed change is made; so that tho' it is only the last paragraph of the chapter that points directly at gospel-times, yet the whole may be improved as a type and figure, representing the curses of the law invading men for their sins, and the comforts of the gospel flowing in to them upon their repentance.

1. **B**low ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 2. A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. 3. A fire devoureth before them, and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Edom before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness, yea, and nothing shall escape them. 4. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and as horsemen, so shall they run. 5. Like the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. 6. Before their face the people shall be much pained: all faces shall gather blackness. 7. They shall run like mighty men, they shall climb the wall like men of war, and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks. 8. Neither shall one thrust another, they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. 9. They shall run to and fro in the city: they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses: they shall enter in at the windows like a thief. 10. The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble, the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; 11. And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word, for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible, and who can abide it?

Here we have God contending with his own professing people for their sins, and executing upon them the judgment written in the law, *Deut. xxviii. 42.* The fruit of thy land shall the locust consume, which was one of those diseases of Egypt that God would bring upon them. *ver. 60.*

1. Here is the war proclaimed, *ver. 1.* Blow ye the trumpet in Zion; either to call the invading army together, and then the trumpet sounds a charge, or rather to give notice to Judah and Jerusalem of the approach of the judgment, that they might prepare to meet their God in the way of his judgments, and might endeavour by prayers and tears, the church's best artillery, to put by the stroke. It was the priests' business to sound the trumpet, *Numb. x. 8.* both as an appeal to God in the day of their distress, and a summons to the people to come together to seek his face. Note, It is the work of ministers to give warning from the word of God of the fatal consequences of sin, and to reveal his wrath from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. And tho' it is not the privilege of Zion and Jerusalem to be exempted from the judgments of God, if they provoke him, yet it is their privilege to be warned of them that they may make their peace with him. Even in the holy mountain the alarm must be sounded, and then it sounds most dreadful, *Amos iii. 2.* Now, shall a trumpet be blown.

blown in the city, in the holy city, and the people not be afraid? Surely they will; Amos iii. 6. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; they shall be made to tremble by the judgment itself; let them therefore tremble at the alarm of it.

2. Here is a general idea given of the day of battle, which cometh, which is *nigh at hand*, and there is no avoiding it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, in which he will both manifest and magnify himself. It is a day of darkness and gloominess, ver. 2. literally so, the swarms of locusts and caterpillars being so large and so thick as to darken the sky, Exod. x. 15. or rather figuratively; it will be a melancholy time, a time of grievous affliction. And it will come as the morning spread upon the mountains, the darkness of this day will come as suddenly, as the morning light, as irresistibly, will spread as far, and grow upon them as the morning light.

3. Here is the army drawn up in array; ver. 2. they are a great people and a strong. Any one that sees the vast numbers that there shall be of locusts and caterpillars, destroying the land, will say (as we are all apt to be most affected with what is present) surely, never was the like before, nor ever will be the like again. Note, Extraordinary judgments are rare things, and seldom happen, which is an instance of God's patience; when God had drowned the world once, he promised never to do it again. The army is here described to be (1.) Very bold and daring; they are as horses, as war horses that rush into the battle, and are not affrighted, Job xxxix. 22. and as horsemen carried on with martial fire and fury, so they shall run, ver. 4. Some of the ancients have observed, that the head of a locust is very like in shape to the head of a horse. (2.) Very loud and noisy; like the noise of chariots, of many chariots, when driven furiously over rough ground, on the tops of the mountains, ver. 5. Hence is borrowed part of the description of the locusts which St John saw rise out of the bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 7, 9. The shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared to the battle; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots, of many horses running to the battle. Historians tell us, that the noise made by swarms of locusts in those countries that use to be infested with them, hath sometimes been heard six miles off. The noise is likewise compared to that of a roaring fire; it is like the noise of a flame that devours the stubble; which noise is the more terrible, because that which it is the indication of, is devouring. Note, When God's judgments are abroad, they make a great noise; and it is necessary for the awakening of a secure and stupid world. (3.) They are very regular and keep ranks in their march; tho' numerous and greedy of spoil, yet they are as a strong people set in battle array, ver. 5. They shall march every one on his ways, straight forward, as if they had been trained up by the discipline of war to keep their post, and observe their right-hand man; They shall not break their ranks, nor one thrust another, ver. 7, 8. Their number and swiftness shall breed no confusion. See how God can make creatures to act by rule, that have no reason to act by, when he designs to serve his own purposes by them. And see how necessary it is that those who are employed in any service for God, should observe order, and keep ranks, should diligently go on in their own work, and not stand in one another's way. (4.) They are very swift; they run like horsemen, ver. 4. run like mighty men, ver. 7. they run to and fro in the city, and run upon the wall, ver. 9. when God sends forth his command on earth, his word runs very swiftly, Psal. cxlvii. 15. Angels have wings, and so have locusts, when God makes use of them.

4. Here is the terrible execution done by this formidable army. (1.) In the country, ver. 3. View the army in the front, and you will see a fire devouring before them, they consume all as if they breathed fire; view it in the rear, and you will see those that come behind as furious as the foremost, behind them a flame burns. When they are gone, then it will appear what destruction they have made. Look upon the fields that they have not yet invaded, and they are as the garden of Eden, pleasant to the eye, and full of good fruits, they are the pride and glory of the country; but look upon the fields that they have eaten up, and they are as a desolate wilderness. One would not think that these had ever been like the former, and yet so they were perhaps but the day before, or that those should ever be made like these, and yet so they shall be perhaps by to-morrow night; yea, and nothing shall escape them that can possibly be made food for them. Let none be proud of the beauty of their grounds, any more than of their bodies, for God can soon change the face of both. (2.) In the city, they shall climb the wall, ver. 7. they shall run upon the houses, and enter in at the windows like a thief, ver. 9. when Egypt was plagued with locusts, they filled Pharaoh's houses, and the houses of his servants, Exod. x. 5, 6. The locusts out of the bottomless pit, Satan's emissaries and missionaries of the man of sin, do as these locusts. God's judgments too, when they come with commission, cannot be kept out with bars and bolts; they will find or force their way.

5. The impressions that should hereby be made upon the people. They shall find it to no purpose to make opposition, these enemies are invulnerable, and therefore irresistible, when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded, ver. 8. And those that cannot be hurt, cannot be stopped: and therefore before their faces

the people shall be much pained, ver. 6. as the merchants are in pain for their trading ships, when they hear they were just in the mouth of a squadron of the enemies. One was in pain for his field, another for his vineyard, and all faces gather blackness, which notes the utmost consternation imaginable. Men in fear look pale, but men in despair look black; the whiteness of a sudden fright, when it is settled, turns into blackness. What is the matter of our pride and pleasure, God can soon make the matter of our pain. The terror that the country should be in is described, ver. 10. by figurative expressions. The earth shall quake, and the heavens tremble, even the hearts that seemed undaunted, so firm that nothing would frighten them, as immovable as heaven or earth, yet shall be seized with astonishment. Or, when the inhabitants of the land are made to quake, it seems to them as if all about them trembled too. Through the prevalency of their fear, or for want of the supports of life they used to have, their eye shall wax dim, and their sight fail them, so that to them, the sun and moon shall seem to be dark, and the stars to withdraw their shining. Note, When God frowns upon men, the lights of heaven will be small joy to them. For man, by rebelling against his Creator, has forfeited the benefit of all the creatures. But tho' this here is to be understood figuratively, there is a day coming when it will be accomplished in the letter, when the heavens shall be rolled together like a scroll, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. Particular judgments should awaken us to think of the general judgment.

6. We are here directed to look up to him who is the commander in chief of this formidable army, and that is God himself, ver. 11. It is his army, it is his camp; he raised it, he gives it commission; he utters his voice before it, as the general useth to give orders to his army, what to do; and make a speech to animate the soldiers; it is the Lord that gives the word of command to all these animals, which they exactly observe. Some think with this cloud of locusts God sent terrible thunder, for that is called, The voice of the Lord, and was another of the plagues of Egypt, and this made the heavens and the earth tremble. It is the day of the Lord, as it was called, ver. 1. for in this war we are sure he carries the day; it must needs be his, for his camp is great and numerous, those whom he makes war upon, he can, as here, overpower with numbers; and whoever he employs to execute his word, as the minister of his justice, is sure to be made strong, and par negotio; whom God gives commission to, he girds with strength for the executing of that commission. And this makes the great day of the Lord very terrible to all those, who in that day are to be made the monuments of his justice; for who can abide it? None can escape the arrests of God's wrath, can make head against the force of it, or bear up under the weight of it, 1 Sam. vi. 20. Psal. lxxvi. 7.

12. ¶ Therefore also now, faith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. 13. And rent your heart and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil. 14. Who knoweth if he will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meat-offering, and a drink-offering unto the LORD your God? 15. ¶ Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. 16. Gather the people: sanctify the congregation: assemble the elders: gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. 17. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, and give not thine heritage to reproach; that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?

We have here an earnest exhortation to repentance, inferred from that desolating judgment described and threatened in the foregoing verses, Therefore now turn ye to the Lord. (1.) Thus you must answer the end and intention of the judgment; for it was sent for this end to convince you of your sins, to humble you for them, to reduce you to your right minds, and to your allegiance. God brings us into straits, that he may bring us to repentance, and so bring us to himself. (2.) Thus you may stay the progress of the judgment. Things are bad with you, but thus you may prevent their growing worse; nay, if you take this course, they will soon grow better.

Here is a gracious invitation;

1. To a personal repentance, exercised in the soul; every family apart, and their wives apart, Zech. xii. 12. When the judgments of God are abroad, each person is concerned to contribute his quota to the common supplications, having contributed to the common guilt. Every one must mend one, and mourn

for one, and then we should all be mended, and all found among God's mourners.

Observe, 1. What we are here called to; which will teach us what it is to *repent*; for it is the same that the Lord our God still requires of us, we having all made work for repentance. (1.) We must be *truly humbled for our sins*, must be sorry we have by sin offended God, and ashamed we have by sin wronged ourselves, both wronged our judgments, and wronged our interests. There must be outward *expressions* of sorrow and shame, *fasting* and *weeping*, and *mourning*; tears for the trouble must be turned into tears for the sin that procured it. But what will the outward *expressions* of sorrow avail, if the inward *impressions* be not agreeable, and not only accompany them, but be the root and spring of them, and give rise to them? And therefore it follows, *rent your heart, and not your garments*; not but that according to the custom of that age, it was proper for them to *rent their garments*, in token of great grief for their sins, and a holy indignation against themselves for their folly: but rest not in the doing of that, as if that were sufficient, but be more in care to accommodate your spirits, than to accommodate your dress to a day of fasting and humiliation; nay, *rent not your garments* at all, unless withal you *rent your hearts*, for the sign without the thing signified, is but a jest and a mockery, and an affront to God. *Renting the heart*, is that which God looks for and requires, that is the *broken and contrite heart* which he *will not despise*. Psal. li. 17. When we are greatly grieved in soul for sin, so that it even *cuts us to the heart*, to think how we have dishonoured God, and disparaged ourselves by it, when we conceive an aversion to sin, and earnestly desire and endeavour to get clear of the principles of it, and never to return to the practice of it, then *we rent our hearts for it*; and then will God *rent the heavens*, and come down to us with mercy. (2.) We must be *thoroughly converted* to our God, and *come home* to him when we *fall out* with sin. *Turn ye even to me, saith the Lord*, ver. 12. and again, ver. 13. *turn unto the Lord your God*. Our fasting and weeping is worth nothing, if we do not *with it* turn to God, as our God. When we are fully convinced that it is our duty and interest to keep in with him, and are heartily sorry we have ever turned the back upon him, and thereupon by a firm and fixed resolution make his glory our end, his will our rule, and his favour our felicity, then we *return to the Lord our God*, and this we are all commanded and invited to do, and to do it quickly.

2. What arguments are here used to persuade this people thus to turn to the Lord, and to turn to him *with all their hearts*. When the heart is *rent for sin*, and *rent from it*, then it is prepared to turn *entirely* to God, and to be devoted *entirely* to him, and he will have it all or none. Now to bring ourselves to this; let us consider,

1. We are sure he is in the general a good God. Therefore we must *turn to the Lord our God*, not only because he has been just and righteous in punishing us for our sins, the fear of which should drive us to him, but because *he is gracious and merciful* in receiving us upon our repentance, the hope of which should draw us to him. He is *gracious and merciful*, delights not in the death of sinners, but desires they may turn and live. *He is slow to anger* against those that offend him, but of *great kindness* towards those that desire to please him. These very expressions are used in God's proclamation of his name, when he caused *his goodness*, and with it all his glory to *pass before Moses*, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *He repenteth him of the evil*, not that he changeth his mind, but when the sinners mind is changed, God's way towards him is changed; the sentence is reversed, and the curse of the law is taken off. Note, That is genuine, ingenuous, and evangelical repentance which ariseth from a firm belief of the mercy of God which we have sinned against, and yet are not in despair. *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. The goodness of God, if it be rightly understood, instead of emboldening us to go on in sin, will be the most powerful inducement to repentance, Psal. cxxx. 4. The act of indemnity brings those to God, whom the act of attainder frightened from him.

2. We have reason to hope, he will upon our repentance give us that good, which by sin we have forfeited and deprived ourselves of, ver. 14. That he will *return and repent*, that he will not proceed against us as he has done, but will act in favour of us. Therefore let us *repent* of our sins against him, and return to him in a way of duty, because then we may hope he will repent of his judgments against us, and return to us in a way of mercy. Now observe, (1.) The manner of the expectation is very humble and modest; *who knows if he will?* Some think it is expressed thus doubtfully, to check the presumption and security of the people, and to quicken them to a holy carefulness and liveliness in their repentance, as *Josh. xxiv. 19*. Or rather, it is expressed doubtfully, because it is the removal of a temporal judgment that they here promise themselves, which we cannot be so confident of, as we may that in the general God is gracious and merciful. There is no question at all to be made, but that if we truly repent of our sins, God will forgive them, and be reconciled to us, but whether he will remove this or the other affliction we are under, may well be questioned, and yet the probability of it should encourage us to repent. Promises of temporal good things, are often made with a peradventure; *it may be you*

shall be hid, Zeph. ii. 3. David's sin is pardoned, and yet the child shall die, and when David prayed for it's life, he said, *as here, who can tell whether God will be gracious to me* in this matter likewise? 2 Sam. xii. 22. The Ninevites repented and reformed upon such a consideration as this, *Jonah iii. 9*. (2.) The matter of the expectation is very pious; the hope God will return and repent, and *leave a blessing behind him*, not as if he were about to go from them, and they could be content with any blessing in lieu of his presence, but *behind him*, i. e. after he hath ceased his controversy with us, he will bestow a blessing upon us; and what is it? It is a *meat-offering and a drink-offering to the Lord our God*. The fruits of the earth are called a *blessing*, Isa. lxxv. 8. because they depend upon God's blessing, and are necessary blessings to us. They had been deprived of these, and that which grieved them most while they were so, was, that God's altar wanted its offerings, and God's priests their maintenance; that therefore which they comfort themselves with the prospect of in their return of plenty, is, that then there should be *meat-offerings and drink-offerings* in abundance, brought to God's altar, which they more desired than to see the wonted abundance of *meat and drink* brought to their own tables. Thus when Hezekiah was in hopes he should recover of his sickness, he asked, *what is the sign that I shall go up*, not to the thrones of judgment, or to the council-board, but *to the house of the Lord*? Isa. xxxviii. 22. Note, The plentiful enjoyment of God's ordinances in their power and purity, is the most valuable instance of a nation's prosperity, and the greatest blessing that can be desired. If God give the blessing of the meat-offering and the drink-offering, that will bring along with it other blessings, will sanctify them, sweeten them, and secure them.

2. They are here called to a *public, national repentance*, to be exercised in the solemn assembly, as a national act; for the glory of God, and the excitement of one another; and that the neighbour nations might know and observe what it was that qualified them for God's gracious returns in mercy to them, which they would be the admiring witnesses of. Let us see here,

1. How the congregation must be called together, ver. 15, 16. The trumpet was blown, ver. 1, to sound an *alarm of war*; but now it must be blown in order to a treaty of peace; God is willing to shew mercy to his people, if he do but find them in a frame fit for it; and therefore call them together, *sanctify a fast*. By the law many annual feasts were appointed, but only one day in the year was to be observed as a fast, the *day of atonement*, a day to *afflict the soul*, and if they had kept close to God and their duty, there would have been no occasion to observe any more; but now they had by sin brought the judgment of God upon them, they are often *called to fasting*. What was said, chap. i. 14. is here repeated, *call a solemn assembly, gather the people*, press them to come together upon this errand, *sanctify the congregation*, appoint a time for solemn preparation before-hand, and put them in mind to prepare themselves; let not the greatest be excused, but *assemble the elders*, the judges and magistrates; let not the meanest be passed by, but *gather the children, and those that suck the breasts*: It is good to bring little children, as soon as they are capable of understanding any thing, to religious assemblies, that they may be trained up betimes in the way wherein they should go; but these were brought even when they were *at the breast*, and were *kept fasting*, that by their cries for the breast, the hearts of the parents might be moved to repent of sin which God might justly visit upon their children, so as that the *tongue of the sucking child* might *cleave to the roof of his mouth*, Lam. iv. 4. And that on them God might have compassion, as he had on the infants of Nineveh, *Jonah iv. 11*. New married people must not be exempted; *let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet*; let not them take state upon them, as usual, not put on their ornaments, or indulge themselves in mirth, but apply themselves to the duties of the publick fast, with as much gravity and sadness as any of their neighbours. Note, Private joys must always give way to publick sorrows, both those for affliction, and those for sin.

2. How the work of the day must be carried on, ver. 17. (1.) The priests, *the Lord's ministers*, must preside in the congregation, and be God's mouth to the people, and theirs to God; who but they should stand in the gap to turn away the wrath of God, whose business it was to make intercession upon ordinary occasions? (2.) They must officiate *between the porch and the altar*; there they used to attend about the sacrifices, and therefore now they have no sacrifices to offer, or next none, there they must offer up spiritual sacrifices. There the people must see them *weeping and wrestling*, like their father Jacob, and be helped into the same devout frame. Ministers must themselves be affected with those things wherewith they desire to affect others. It was *between the porch and the altar*, that Zechariah the son of Jehoiadah was put to death for his faithfulness, that precious blood God would require at their hands, and therefore to turn away the judgment threatened for it there, they must *weep*. (3.) They must pray; words are here put into their mouths, which they might in their prayers enlarge upon. Their petition must be, *Spare thy people, O Lord*. God's people, when they are in distress, can expect no relief against God's justice, but what comes from his mercy. They cannot say, *Lord, right us*, but *Lord, spare us*.

us. We deserve the correction, we need it, but, Lord, mitigate it. The sinners supplication is, *spare us, good Lord*. Their plea must be taken from the relation wherein they stand to God; they are *thy people*, and *thine heritage*, therefore have compassion on them; but especially from the concern of God's glory in their trouble. Lord, *give not thine heritage to reproach*, to the reproach of famine; let not the land of Canaan that hath so long been celebrated for the glory of all lands, now be made the scorn of all lands; let not *the heathen rule over them*, as they will easily do when thine heritage is thus impoverished, and disabled to subsist. Let not the heathen make them a *proverb*, or a *by-word*, so some read it; let it never be said, as poor and beggarly as an Israelite. Note, The maintaining of the credit of the nation among its neighbours, is a blessing to be desired and prayed for by all that wish well to it. But that reproach of the church, is especially to be dreaded and deprecated, which reflects upon God; let them not *say among the people, where is their God?* That God who has promised to help them, whom they have boasted so much of, and put such a confidence in. If God's heritage be destroyed, the neighbours will say, that God was either weak and could not relieve them, or unkind and would not. God thus triumphs over the pretended deities, *Deut. xxxii. 37. where are now their gods in whom they trusted?* And Sennacherib thus triumphs over them, *where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad?* But it must by no means be suffered, that any should say of Israel, *Where is their God?* for we are sure our God is in the heavens, *Psal. cxv. 2, 3.* is in his temple, *Psal. xi. 4.*

18. ¶ Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people. 19. Yea, the LORD will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith: and I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen. 20. But I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east-sea, and his hinder part towards the utmost sea; and his stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things. 21. ¶ Fear not, O land, be glad, and rejoyce: for the LORD will do great things. 22. Be not afraid, ye beasts of the field: for the pastures of the wilderness do spring, for the tree beareth her fruit, the fig-tree and the vine do yield their strength. 23. Be glad then ye children of Zion, and rejoyce in the LORD your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month. 24. And the floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil. 25. And I will restore to you the ears that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm, my great army which I sent among you. 26. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. 27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed.

See how ready God is to succour and relieve his people, how he *wants to be gracious*; as soon as ever they humble themselves under his hand, and pray, and seek his face, he presently meets them with his favours; they prayed that God would *spare them*, and see here with what *good words, and comfortable words*, he answered them; for God's promises are real answers to the prayers of faith, because with him, saying and doing are not two things. Now observe,

1. Whence this mercy promised shall take rise, *ver. 18.* God will be *jealous for his land*, and *pity his people*. He will have an eye, (1.) To his own honour, and the reputation of his covenant with Israel, by which he had conveyed to them that good land, and had given in the value of it very high; now he will not suffer it to be despised or disparaged, but *will be jealous* for the credit of *his land*, and the inhabitants of it, who had been praised as a *happy people*, and therefore must not lie open to reproach as a miserable people. (2.) To their distress; He will *pity his people*, and in pity to them he will restore them their forfeited comforts. God's compassion is a great encouragement to those that come humbly to him as penitents, and as petitioners.

2. What his mercy shall be; in several instances.

(1.) The destroying army shall be dispersed and defeated, *ver. 20.* I will remove far off from you the northern army, that army of locusts and caterpillars that invaded you from the north; brought in upon the wings of a north-wind, an army which you could put no stop to the progress of; but when you have made your peace with God, he will ease you of these soldiers that are quar-

No. lxxiv.

tered upon you, and will drive them into a land barren and desolate, into that vast howling wilderness that Israel wandered in, where after having surfeited upon the plenty of Canaan, they shall perish for want of sustenance; those that have their face to the east-sea, the dead-sea, which lay east of Judea, shall perish in that, and the rear of the army shall be lost in the great sea, called here *the utmost sea*. They had made the land *barren and desolate*, and now God will cast them into a land *barren and desolate*. Thus those whom God employs for the correction of his people, come afterwards to be themselves reckoned with; and the rod thrown into the fire. Nothing shall remain of these swarms of insects; but the *ill savour of them*. When Egypt was eased of the plague of locusts, they were carried away to the Red-sea, *Exod. x. 9.* Note, When an affliction has done its work, it shall be removed in mercy, as the locusts of Canaan were from a *penitent people*, not as the locusts of Egypt were removed *in wrath* from an *impenitent prince*, only to make room for another plague. Many interpreters by this northern army, understand that of Sennacherib, which was dispersed, when God by it had *accomplished his whole work upon mount Zion, and upon Jerusalem*, *Isa. x. 12.* This enemy shall be driven away, because he has done great things, has done a great deal of mischief; and has magnified to do it, has done it in the pride of his heart; therefore it follows, *ver. 21.* The Lord will do great things for his people, as the enemy has done great things against them; to convince them that wherein they deal proudly, he is and will be above them; that what great things soever they did, they did no more than God commissioned them to do; and as when he said to them, *go, they went*, so when he said to them, *come, they came*, to shew that they were *soldiers under him*.

(2.) The destroyed land shall be watered and made fruitful. When the army is scattered, yet what shall we do if the desolation they have made continue? It is therefore promised, *ver. 22.* that *the pastures of the wilderness*, the pastures which the locusts had left as bare as *the wilderness*, shall again *spring*, and the *trees shall again bear their fruit*, particularly the *fig-tree and the vine*. But when we see how the country is wasted, we are tempted to say, *can these dry bones live?* If the Lord should make windows in heaven, it cannot be; but it shall be, for, *ver. 23.* the Lord has given; and will give you the former rain and the latter rain, and if he give them in mercy, he will give them moderately, so that the rain shall not turn into a judgment, and he will give them in due season; the *latter rain in the first month*, when it was wanted and expected. It would make it comfortable to them, to see it coming from the hand of God, and ordered by his wisdom, for then we are sure it is well ordered. He hath given you a teacher of righteousness, so the margin reads it, for the same word that signifies the rain, signifies a teacher, and that which we translate moderately, is according to righteousness; and this teacher of righteousness, saith one of the rabbins, is the king Messias; and of him many others understand this; for he is a teacher come from God, and he shews us the way of righteousness. But others understand it of any prophet that instructs unto righteousness; and some of Hezekiah particularly, others of Isaiah. Note, It is a good sign God has mercy in store for a people, when he sends them teachers of righteousness, pastors after his own heart.

(3.) All their losses shall be repaired, *ver. 25.* I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten; you shall be comforted according to the time that you have been afflicted, and shall have years of plenty to balance the years of famine. Thus doth it repent the Lord concerning his servants, when they repent, and to shew how perfectly he is reconciled to them, he makes good the damage they have sustained by his judgments, and like the jailer washeth their stripes. Tho' in justice he distrained upon them, and did them no wrong, yet in compassion he makes restitution; as the father of the prodigal upon his return made up all he had lost by his sin and folly, and took him into his family, as in his former estate. The locusts and caterpillars are here called God's great army which he sent among them, and he will therefore repair what they had devoured, because they were his army.

(4.) They shall have great abundance of all good things. The earth shall yield her increase, and they shall enjoy it. Look into the stores where they lay up, and you shall find the floors full of wheat, and the fats overflowing with wine and oil, *ver. 24.* whereas in the day of their distress, the wine and oil languished, and the barns were broken down, *chap. i. 10, 17.* Look upon their tables where they lay out what they have laid up, and you shall find that they eat in plenty and are satisfied, *ver. 26.* They do not eat to excess, nor are surfeited, we hope the drunkards are cured by the late affliction of their inordinate love of wine and strong drink, for tho' they were brought in howling for the scarcity, *chap. i. 5.* They are not brought in again here singing for the plenty of it; but now all shall have enough, and shall know when they have enough, for God will make their food nourishing, and give to them to be content with it.

These are the mercies promised, and in these God doth great things, *ver. 21.* He deals wondrously with his people, *ver. 26.* Herein he glorifies his power, and shews that he can relieve his people, tho' their distress be never so great, and glorifies his goodness that he will do it upon their repentance, tho' their provocations were never so great. Note, When God deals gra-

ciously with poor sinners that return to him, it must be acknowledged that he *deals wondrously*, and doth great things. Some expositors understand these promises *figuratively*, as pointing at the gospel grace, and having their accomplishment in the abundant comforts that are treasured up for believers in the covenant of grace, and the satisfaction of soul they have therein. When God sends us his promises to be the matter of our comfort, his graces to be the grounds of it, and his Spirit to be the author of it, we may well own that he hath sent us according to his promise here, *ver. 19. corn, and wine, and oyl*, or that which is unspeakably better, and we have reason to be *satisfied therewith*.

3. What use shall be made of these returns of God's mercy to them, and the good account they shall turn to.

1. God shall have the glory of it; for they shall rejoice in the Lord their God, *ver. 23.* and what is the matter of their rejoicing, shall be the matter of their thanksgiving, they shall *praise the name of the Lord their God*, *ver. 26.* and not praise their idols, nor call their corn and wine the *rewards that their lovers had given them*. Note, Then the plenty of our creature-comforts is a mercy indeed to us, when by them our hearts are enlarged in love and thankfulness to God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, tho' we serve him but poorly. When God restores to us plenty, after we have known scarcity, as it is doubly pleasant to us, so it should make us the more thankful to God. When Israel comes out of a wilderness, into a Canaan, and there eats and is full, surely he will then *blest the Lord* with a very sensible pleasure, for *that good land which he has given him*, *Deut. viii. 10.*

2. They shall have the credit and comfort, and spiritual benefit of it. When God gives them plenty again, and gives them to be satisfied with it. (1.) Their reputation shall be retrieved; they and their God shall be no more reflected upon as unfaithful to one another, when they are returned to him in a way of duty, and he to them in a way of mercy, *ver. 19. I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen*, that triumphed in your calamities, and insulted over you; and *ver. 26.* and again, *ver. 27. My people shall never be ashamed*, as they have been of their good land which they used to boast of, but shall again and ever have the same occasion to boast of it. Note, It redounds much to the honour of God, when he doth that which saves the honour of his people; and those that are his people indeed, tho' they may be for a time, they shall not be always a *reproach among the heathen*; if we be rightly ashamed of our sins against God, we shall never be ashamed of our glorying in God. (2.) Their joys shall be revived, *ver. 23. Be glad and rejoice, O land*, and all the inhabitants of it. Times of plenty use to be times of joy, yet the favour of God *puts gladness into the heart*, more than they have whose *corn, and wine, and oil increaseth*. But especially be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, *ver. 23.* They mourned in Zion, *ver. 15.* and therefore there in a particular manner they shall rejoice; for those that sow in penitential tears, shall certainly reap in thankful joys: the children of Zion who led the rest in *fasting*, must lead the rest in *rejoicing*. But observe, they shall rejoice in the Lord their God; not so much in the good things themselves that are given them, as in the good hand that gives them, and in the return of his favour to them, as theirs in covenant, which these good things are the tokens and pledges of; the joy of harvest, and the joy of a feast must both terminate in God, whose love we should taste in all the gifts of his bounty, that we may make him our chief joy, as he is our chief good, and the fountain of all good to us. (3.) Their faith in God shall be confirmed and increased. When temporal mercies are made by the grace of God to be of spiritual advantage to us, and plenty for the body is so far from being an enemy (as with many it proves) that it becomes a friend to the prosperity of the soul, then they are mercies indeed to us. This is promised here, *ver. 27. Ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel*, the holy One in the midst of thee, (*Hos. xi. 9.*) and that I am the Lord your God, and none else. As it proves that the Lord is God, and there is none other, because he wounds, and he heals, he forms light and darkness, he doth good and evil, *Isa. xlv. 7.* *Deut. xxxii. 39.* So it proves him to be the God of Israel, a God in covenant with his people, and a father to them, that as a father he both corrects them when they offend, and comforts them when they repent. It was the burthen of the threatnings in Ezekiel's prophecy, such and such evils I will bring upon you, and ye shall know that I am the Lord; and the same is here made the crown of the promises; you shall eat and be satisfied, and rejoice, and thus ye shall know that I am the Lord. Note, We should labour to grow in our acquaintance with God by all providences, both merciful and afflictive. When God gives to his people plenty, and peace and joy upon their return to him, he thereby gives them to understand, that he is pleased with their repentance, that he has pardoned their sins, and that he is theirs as much as ever; that they are taken into the same covenant with him, for he is the Lord their God, and into the same communion, for he is in the midst of them; nigh unto them in all that they call upon him for, and as the sun in the centre of the worlds, so in the midst of them, as to diffuse his benign influences to all the parts of his land.

3. Even the inferior creatures shall share in it, and be made easy by it. *Fear not, O Lord*, *ver. 21. Be not afraid ye beasts of the field*, *ver. 22.* They had suffered for the sin of man, and for God's quarrel with him, and now they shall fare the better for man's repentance, and God's reconciliation to him. Nay, the beasts were said to cry unto God, *chap. i. 20.* and now that cry is answered, and they are bid not to be afraid, for they shall have plenty of all that which their nature craves; God in sparing Nineveh had an eye to the cattle, *Jonah iv. 10.* for the cattle had fasted, *chap. iii. 8.* This may lead us to think of the restitution of all things, when the creature that is now made subject to vanity, and groans under it, shall be brought, tho' not into the glorious joy, yet into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *Rom. viii. 21.*

28. ¶ And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: 29. And also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days, will I pour out my spirit. 30. And I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. 31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. 32. And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD, shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

The promises of corn, and wine, and oil, in the foregoing verses, would be very acceptable to a wasted country, but here we are taught, that we must not rest in those things; God has reserved some better things for us, and these verses have reference to those better things; both the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of glory, and the happiness of true believers in both. We are here told,

1. How the kingdom of grace shall be introduced by a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, *ver. 28, 29.* We are not to seek for the meaning of this promise, nor in doubt what it refers to, and wherein it had its accomplishment, for the apostle Peter has given us an infallible explication, and application of it, assuring us that when the Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, at the day of Pentecost, *Acts ii. 1, &c.* that that was the very thing which was spoken of here by the prophet Joel, *ver. 16, 17.* That was the gift of the Spirit, which according to this prediction was to come, and we are not to look for any other, no more than for another accomplishment of the promise of the Messiah. Now (1.) The blessing itself here promised is the pouring out of the Spirit of God, his gifts, graces, and comforts, which the blessed Spirit is the author of. We often read in the Old Testament of the Spirit of the Lord coming by drops, as it were upon the judges and prophets whom God raised up for extraordinary services, but now the Spirit shall be poured out plentifully in a full stream; as was promised with an eye to gospel-times, *Isa. xlv. 3. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed* (2.) The time fixed for this is afterwards, after the fulfilling of the foregoing promises, this shall be fulfilled; St Peter expounds this of the last days, the days of the Messiah, by whom the world was to have its last revelation of the divine will and grace in the last days of the Jewish church, a little before its dissolution. (3.) The extent of this blessing in respect of the persons on whom it shall be bestowed; the Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, i. e. not as hitherto upon Jews only, but upon Gentiles also; for in Christ there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, *Rom. x. 11, 12.* Hitherto divine revelation was confined to the seed of Abraham, none but those of the land of Israel, had the Spirit of prophecy, but in the last days all flesh shall see the glory of God, *Isa. xl. 5.* and shall come to worship before him, *Isa. lxvi. 23.* The Jews understand it, of all flesh in the land of Israel, and Peter himself did not fully understand it, as speaking of the Gentiles, till he saw it accomplished in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius, and his friends, who were Gentiles, *Acts x. 44, 45.* which was but a continuation of that same gift, which was bestowed on the day of Pentecost. The Spirit shall be poured out upon all flesh, i. e. upon all those whole hearts are made hearts of flesh, soft and tender, and so prepared to receive the impressions and influences of the Holy Ghost. Upon all flesh, i. e. upon some of all sorts of men; the gifts of the Spirit shall not be so sparing, or so much confined as they have been, but shall be more general and diffusive of themselves. (1.) The Spirit shall be poured out upon some of each sex; not your sons only, but your daughters shall prophesy; we read of four sisters in one family that were prophetesses, *Acts xxi. 9.* Not the parents only, but the children shall be filled with the Spirit, which intimates the continuance of this gift for some ages successively in the church. (2.) Upon some of each age; your old men

men that are past their vigour, and whose spirits begin to decay, *your young men* that have yet but little acquaintance with, and experience of, divine things, yet they shall *dream dreams*, and *see visions*, i. e. God will reveal himself by dreams and visions, both to young and old. (3.) Upon those of the meanest rank and condition; even upon the servants and the handmaids; the Jewish doctors say, that *prophecy doth not reside on any*, but such as are *wife, valiant, and rich*, not upon the soul of a *poor man*, or a man in *forrow*; but in Christ Jesus there is *neither bond nor free*, Gal. iii. 28. There were many that *were called being servants*, 1 Cor. vii. 21. but that was no obstruction to their *receiving the Holy Ghost*. (4.) The effect of this blessing, *they shall prophesy*; they shall receive new discoveries of divine things, and that not for their own use only, but for the benefit of the church. They shall interpret scripture, and speak of things, secret, distant, and future, which by the utmost sagacities of reason, and their natural powers, they could not have any insight into, or foresight of. By these extraordinary gifts, the Christian church was first founded, and set up, and the scriptures written, and ministry settled, by which, with the ordinary operations and influences of the Spirit, it was to be afterwards maintained and kept up.

2. How the kingdom of glory shall be introduced by the universal change of nature, ver. 30, 31. The pouring out of the Spirit will be very comfortable to the righteous; but let the unrighteous hear this, and tremble. There is a *great and terrible day of the Lord* coming, which shall be ushered in with wonders in *heaven and earth, blood and fire, and pillars of smoke*, the turning of the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood. This is to have its full accomplishment (as the learned Dr. Pocock thinks) in the day of judgment, at the end of time, before which these signs will be performed in the letter of them, yet so as that it was accomplished in part in the death of Christ, which is called the judgment of this world, when the earth quaked, and the sun was darkened, and a *great and terrible day* it was; and more fully in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was a type and figure of the general judgment, and before which there were many amazing prodigies, besides the convulsions of states and kingdoms prophesied of under the figurative expressions of turning the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the wars and rumours of wars, and distress of nations which our Saviour spoke of as the beginning of these sorrows, Matth. xxiv. 6, 7. But before the last judgment there will be wonders indeed, in *heaven and earth*, the dissolution of both without a metaphor. The judgments of God upon a sinful world, and the frequent destruction of wicked kingdoms by fire and sword, are prefaces to, and presages of, the judgment of the world at the last day. Those on whom the Spirit is poured out, shall foresee and foretell that *great and terrible day of the Lord*, and expound the wonders in *heaven and earth* that go before it; for as to his first coming, so to his second did and do all the prophets bear witness, Rev. x. 7.

3. The safety and happiness of all true believers both in the first and second coming of Jesus Christ, ver. 32. This speaks of particular persons, for to them the New Testament has more respect, and less to kingdoms and nations than the Old.

Now observe here,

1. That there is a salvation wrought out; tho' the day of the Lord will be great and terrible, yet in *mount Zion and in Jerusalem* there shall be deliverance from the terror of it. It is the day of the Lord, the day of his judgment, who knows how to separate between the precious and the vile. In the everlasting gospel, which went from Zion, in the church of the first-born typified by mount Zion, and which is the Jerusalem that is from above, there is deliverance; a way of escaping the wrath to come is found out, and laid open. Christ is himself not only the Saviour, but the salvation; he is so to the ends of the earth. This deliverance laid up for us in the covenant of grace, is in performance of the promises made to the fathers, *there shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said*. See Luke i. 72. Note, This is ground of comfort and hope to sinners, that whatever danger there is in their case, there is also deliverance, deliverance for them if it be not their own fault. And if we would share in deliverance, we must apply our selves to the gospel Zion, to God's Jerusalem.

2. That there is a remnant that are interested in this salvation, and for whom the deliverance is wrought. It is in that remnant, i. e. among them that the deliverance is; or in them, i. e. in their souls and spirits, there are the earnest and evidences of it; *Christ in you the hope of glory*. They are called a remnant, because they are but a few in comparison with the multitudes that are left to perish; a little remnant, but a chosen one, a remnant according to the election of grace. And here we are told who they are that shall be delivered in the great day. (1.) Those that sincerely call upon God. *Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord*, whether Jew or Gentile, (for the apostle expounds it so, Rom. x. 13. where he lays this down as the great rule of the gospel by which we must all be judged) *shall be delivered*. This calling on God supposeth knowledge of him, faith in him, desire towards him, dependence on him, and as an evidence of the sincerity of all this, a conscientious obedience to him; for without that, crying *Lord, Lord*, will not stand us in any stead. Note, It is the praying remnant that shall be the saved remnant. And

it will aggravate the ruin of those who perish, that they might have been saved on such easy terms. (2.) Those that are effectually called to God. The deliverance is sure to the remnant whom the Lord shall call; not only with the common call of the gospel, with which many are called that are not chosen; but with a special call into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, whom the Lord predestinates or prepares, so the Chaldee. St Peter borrows this phrase, Acts ii. 39. Note, Those only shall be delivered in the great day that are now effectually called from sin to God, from self to Christ, from things below to things above.

C H A P. III.

In the close of the foregoing chapter we had a gracious promise of deliverance in mount Zion and Jerusalem; now this whole chapter is a comment upon that promise, shewing what that deliverance shall be, how it shall be wrought by the destruction of the church's enemies, and how it shall be perfected in the everlasting rest and joy of the church. This was in part accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from the attempt that Sennacherib made upon it, in Hezekiah's time, and afterwards in the return of the Jews out of their captivity in Babylon, and other deliverances wrought for the Jewish church betwixt that and Christ's coming. But it has a farther reference to the great redemption wrought out for us by Jesus Christ, and the destruction of our spiritual enemies, and all their agents, and will have its full accomplishment in the judgment of the great day. Here is a prediction, (1) Of God's reckoning with the enemies of his people for all the injuries and indignities that they had done them, and returning them upon their own head, ver. 1—8. (2.) Of God's judging all nations when the measure of their iniquity is full, and appearing publicly to the everlasting confusion of all impenitent sinners, and the everlasting comfort of all his faithful servants, ver. 9—17. (3.) Of the provision God has made for the refreshment of his people, for their safety and purity, when their enemies shall be made desolate, ver. 18—21. These promises were not of private interpretation only, but were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of this scripture might have hope.

1. **F**OR behold, in those days, and in that time when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, 2. I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people, and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land. 3. And they have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they might drink. 4. Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head. 5. Because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temple my goodly pleasant things. 6. The children also of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. 7. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head. 8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD hath spoken it.

We have often heard of the year of the redeemed, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion; now here we have a description of the transactions of that year, and a prophecy of what shall be done when it comes, whenever it comes, for it comes often, and at the end of time it will come once for all.

1. It shall be the year of the redeemed, for God will bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, ver. 1. Tho' the bondage of God's people may be grievous and very long, yet it shall not be everlasting. That in Egypt ended at length in their deliverance into the glorious liberty of the children of God; *let my son go that he may serve me*. That in Babylon shall likewise end well. And the Lord Jesus will provide for the effectual redemption of poor captived souls from under the dominion of sin and Satan; and will proclaim that acceptable year, the year of jubilee, the release of debts and servants, and the opening of the prison to them that were bound. There is a day, there is a time, fixed for the bringing again of the captivity of God's children, for the redeeming

ing of them from the power of the grave; and it shall be the last day, and the period of all time.

2. It shall be the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion. Tho' God may suffer the enemies of his people to prevail against them very far, and for a long time, yet he will call them to an account for it, and will lead captivity captive, *Psal. lxxviii. 18.* will lead those captive that led his people captive, *Rev. xiii. 10.* Observe,

1. Who they are that shall be reckoned with; *all nations*, ver. 2. This intimates, (1.) That *all the nations* had made themselves liable to the judgment of God for wrong done to his people. Persecution is the reigning, crying sin of the world, that *lying in wickedness* it self is set against godliness. The enmity that is in the old serpent, the *god of this world*, against the seed of the woman, appears more or less in the *children of this world*; *marvel not if the world hate you.* (2.) That whatever nation injured God's nation, they should not go unpunished; for he that toucheth the Israel of God, shall be made to know that he toucheth the apple of his eye. Jerusalem will be a *burthensome stone to all people*, *Zech. xii. 3.* But the neighbour-nations shall be particularly reckoned with. *Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Palestine*, or the Philistines, who had been troublesome neighbours to the Israel of God, ver. 4. when the more remote and potent nations that laid Israel waste, are reckoned with, the impotent malice of these that lay near them, and *helped forward the affliction*, *Zech. i. 15.* and made a hand of it, *Ezek. xxvi. 2.* shall not be passed by. Note, Little persecutors shall be called to an account as well as great ones; and though they *could not* do much mischief, shall be reckoned with according to the *wickedness of their endeavours*, and the mischief they *would have done.*

2. The sitting of this court for judgment. They shall all be gathered, ver. 2. That they who have combined together against God's people, *with one consent*, *Psal. lxxxiii. 5.* may together receive their doom. They shall be brought down into the valley of *Jehoshaphat*, which lay near Jerusalem, and there God will plead with them. (1.) Because it is fit that criminals should be tried in the same country where they did the fact. (2.) For their greater confusion, when they shall see that Jerusalem which they have so long endeavoured and hoped for the ruin of, in spite of all their rage, made a *praise in the earth.* (3.) For the greater comfort and honour of God's Jerusalem, which shall see God pleading their cause. (4.) Then shall be re-acted what God did for Jehoshaphat, when he gave him victory over those that invaded him, and furnished him and his people with matter of joy and praise, in the valley of *Berachah.* See *2 Chron. xx. 26.* (5.) It was in this valley of Jehoshaphat (as Dr Lightfoot suggests) that Sennacherib's army, or part of it, lay, when it was destroyed by an angel. They came together to ruin Jerusalem, but God brought them together for their own ruin, *as sheaves in the floor*, *Mic. iv. 12.*

3. The plaintiff called, on whose behalf this prosecution is set on foot; it is *for my people*, and *for my heritage Israel.* It is *their cause* that God will now plead with jealousy. Note, God's people are *his heritage*, his *peculiar*, his *portion*, his *treasure*, above all people, *Exod. xix. 5.* *Deut. xxxii. 9.* They are his demefn, and therefore he has a good action against those that trespass upon them.

4. The charge exhibited against them, which is very particular. Many affronts they had put upon God by their idolatries; but that for which God has a quarrel with them, is the affronts they have put upon his people, and upon the vessels of his sanctuary.

(1.) They had been very abusive to the people of Israel, had scattered them among the nations, and forced them to seek for shelter where they could find a place, or carried them captives into their respective countries, and there industriously dispersed them, for fear of their incorporating for their common safety. They parted their land, and took every one his share of it, as their own; nay, they have cast lots for my people, and sold them. When they had taken them prisoners, (1.) They made a jest of them, made a scorn of them, as of no value, whom they would not release, and yet thought them not worth the keeping; they made nothing of playing them away at dice, or they make a dividend of the prisoners by lot, as the soldiers did of Christ's garments. (2.) They made a gain of them, when they had them they sold them, yet with so much contempt that they did not increase their wealth by their price, but sold them for their pleasure rather than their profit; they gave a boy taken in war for the hire of a harlot, and a girl for so many bottles of wine as would serve them for one sitting; a goodly price at which they valued them, and goodly preferment for a son and daughter of Israel, to be a slave and a drudge in a tavern, or a bawdy-house. Observe here, how that which is got by one sin is commonly spent upon another. The spoil which these enemies of the Jews gathered by injustice and violence, they scattered and threw away in drinking and whoring; such is the character many times, and such the conversation of the enemies and persecutors of the people of God. The Tyrians and Philistines, when they seized any of the children of Judah and Jerusalem, either took them prisoners in war, or kidnapped them, they sold them to the Grecians, with whom the men of Tyre

traded in the persons of men, *Ezek. xxvii. 13.* that they might remove them far from their own border, ver. 6. It was a great reproach to Israel, God's first-born, his free-born, to be thus bought and sold among the heathen.

(2.) They had unjustly seized God's silver and gold, ver. 5. By which some understand the wealth of Israel. The silver and gold which God's people had, he calls *his*, because they had received it from him, and devoted it to him; and whosoever robbed them, God took it as if they had robbed him, and would make reprisals accordingly. Those that take away the estates of good men for well-doing, will be found guilty of sacrilege, they take God's silver and gold. But it seems rather to be meant of the vessels and treasures of the temple, which God here calls his *goodly pleasant things*, precious and desirable to him and all that are his. These they carried into their temples, as trophies of their victory over God's Israel, thinking therein they triumphed over Israel's God, nay, and that their idols triumphed over him. Thus the ark was put in Dagon's temple. Thus they did unjustly, *what have you to do with me?* ver. 4. *i. e.* with my people; what wrong have they done you? What provocation have they given you? You had nothing to do with them, and yet you do all this against them. Devices are devised against the quiet in the land, and those offended and harmed that are harmless and inoffensive: *will you render me a recompence?* Can they pretend that either God or his people have done them any injury, for which they may justify themselves by the law of retaliation, in doing them these mischiefs? No, they have no colour for it. Note, It is no new thing for those that have been very civil and obliging to their neighbours, yet to find them very unkind and un-neighbourly; and for those who do no injuries, yet to suffer many.

5. The sentence passed upon them. In general, ver. 4. If ye recompense me, if you pretend a quarrel with me, if you provoke me thus to jealousy, if you touch the apple of mine eye, I will swiftly and speedily return your recompence upon your own head. Those that contend with God will find themselves unable to make their part good with him. He will recompense them suddenly when they little think of it, and have not time to prevent it; if he take them to task, he will soon effect their ruin. Particularly it is threatened, (1.) That they shall not gain their end in the mischief they designed against God's people. They thought to have removed them so far from their border, that they should never return to it again, ver. 6. But (saith God) I will raise them out of the place whither you have sold them, and they shall not, as you intended, be buried alive there. Men selling the people of God will not deprive him of his property in them. (2.) That they shall be paid in their own coin, as Adonibezek was, ver. 8. I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, you shall lie as much at their mercy, as they have been at yours, *Isa. lx. 44.* Thus the Jews had rule over them that hated them, *Esth. ix. 1.* And then they shall justly be sold to the Sabeans, to a people far off. This (some think) had its accomplishment in the victories obtained by the Maccabees over the enemies of the Jews; others think it looks as far forward as the last day, when the upright shall have dominion, *Psal. xlix. 14.* and the saints shall judge the world. It is certain, none ever hardened his heart against God, or his church, and prospered long; no, not Pharaoh himself, for the Lord hath spoken it, for the comfort of all his suffering servants, that *vengeance is his, and he will repay.*

9. ¶ Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles: prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up. 10. Beat your plow-shares into swords, and your pruning-hooks into spears; let the weak say, I am strong. 11. Assemble your selves, and come all ye heathen, and gather your selves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. 12. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about. 13. Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe; come, get ye down, for the press is full, the fats overflow, for their wickedness is great. 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. 15. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: 16. The LORD also shall rore out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the LORD will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17. So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

What the Psalmist had long before ordered to be said among the heathen, Psal. xcvi. 10. the prophet here will have in like manner to be published to all the nations, that *the Lord reigns*, and that *he comes, he comes to judge the earth*, as he had long been judging in the earth. The notice here given of God's judging the nations, may have reference to the destruction of Sennacherib, Nebuchadnezzar, Antiochus, and to the Antichrist especially, and all the proud enemies of the Christian church; but some of the best interpreters, antient and modern (particularly the learned Dr Pocock) think the scope of these verses is to set forth the day of the *last judgment*, under the similitude of God's making war upon the enemies of his kingdom, and his gathering in the harvest of the earth, both which similitudes we find used in the Revelation, chap. xix. 11. — xiv. 18. Here we have,

1. A challenge given to all the enemies of God's kingdom, to do their worst; to signify to them that God is *preparing war* against them, they are called upon to prepare war against him, ver. 9, 10, 11. When the hour of God's judgment is come, effectual methods shall be taken to gather all nations to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, Rev. xvi. 14. — xx. 8. It seems to be here spoken ironically, *proclaim ye this among the Gentiles*; let all the forces of the nations be summoned to join in confederacy against God and his people. It is like that, *Isa. viii. 9. Associate your selves, O ye people, and gird your selves*, but ye shall be broken to pieces, *prepare war*, muster up all your strength, *wake up the mighty men*, call them into your service, excite them to vigilance and resolution; *let all the men of war draw near, let them come* and enter the lists with omnipotence if they dare; let them not complain for want of weapons, but let them *beat their plow-shares into swords*, and their *pruning-hooks into spears*. Let them resolve, if they will, never to return to their husbandry again, but either to conquer or die: let none plead unfitness to bear arms, but let the weak say, *I am strong*, and will venture into the field of battle. Thus doth a God of almighty power bid defiance to all the opposition of the powers of darkness; let the *heathen rage*, and the *kings of the earth take counsel together* against the Lord and his Christ; let them *assemble and come, and gather themselves together*; but he that sits in heaven shall laugh at them, and while he thus calls them, has them in derision, *Psal. ii. 1, 5*. The heathen must be *wakened*, must be raised from the dead, that they may come up to the valley of *Jehoshaphat*, to receive their doom, ver. 12. may come up out of their graves, come up into the air, to meet the Lord there. *Jehoshaphat* signifies, *the judgment of the Lord*. Let them come to the place of God's judgment, which perhaps is the chief reason for the using of this name here, but it is put together as a proper name for the sake of allusions to the place so called, which we observed before, let them come thither where God will sit to judge the heathen, to that throne of glory before which shall be gathered all nations, *Matth. xxv. 32*. for before the judgment-seat of Christ we must all appear. The challenge, ver. 9. is turned into a summons, ver. 12. It is not only *come if you dare*, but *you shall come* whether you will or no, for there is no escaping the judgments of God.

2. A charge given to the ministers of God's justice to appear and act against these daring enemies of his kingdom among men. And therefore *cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord*, ver. 11. when they bring their forces into the field, let God bring his, let the archangel's trumpet found a charge, to call together his *mighty ones*, i. e. his angels. Perhaps it is with reference to this that Christ's coming from heaven at the last day is said to be with his *mighty angels*, 2 Thess. i. 7. These are the *hosts of the Lord* that shall fight his battles then when he shall put down all opposing rule, principality, and power, when he shall judge among the heathen, *Psal. cx. 5*. Some think these words, ver. 9, 10. *Prepare war, wake up the mighty men*, are not a challenge to the enemies hosts, but a charge to God's hosts, let them draw near, and come up. When God's cause is to be pleaded, either by the law, or by the sword, he hath those ready that shall plead it effectually; witnesses ready to appear for him in the court of judgment, soldiers ready to appear for him in the field of battle. They shall *beat plow-shares into swords*, if need be. However, it is plain to them the charge is given, ver. 13. *Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe*; that is, *their wickedness is great*, the measure of it is full, and they are ripe for ruin. Our Saviour has expounded this, *Matth. xiii. 39. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels*. And they are commanded to *thrust in their sickle, their sharp sickle*, and gather in both the *harvest* and the *vintage*, Rev. xiv. 15, 18. Note, The greatness of mens wickedness makes them ripe for God's judgment.

3. The vast appearance that shall be in that great and solemn day; ver. 14. *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision*, the same which before was called the valley of *Jehoshaphat*, or, of the judgment of the Lord, for the day of the Lord is near in that valley. Note, 1. The judgment-day, that day of the Lord, has all along been looked upon, and spoken of as *nigh at hand*. Enoch said, *Behold the Lord comes*, as if the judge were then standing before the door; because it is certain that day will come, and will come according to the appointment, and *a thousand years with God are but as one day*; things are ripening apace for

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it; we ought always to be ready for it, because *our judgment is at hand*. 2. The day of judgment will be the day of *decision*, when every man's eternal state will be determined, and the controversy that has been long depending between the kingdom of Christ and that of Satan shall be finally decided, and an end put to the struggle. *The valley of the distribution of judgment*, so the Chaldee, when every man shall receive according to the things done in the body. *The valley of threshing*, so the margin, carrying on the metaphor of the harvest, ver. 13. The proud enemies of God's people will then be crushed and broken to pieces, and made as the *dust of the summer threshing-floors*. 3. Innumerable multitudes will be gathered together to receive their final doom in that day. As in the destruction of Gog we read of the valley of Hamon-Gog, and the city of Hamonah, *Ezek. xxxix. 15, 16*. both signifying the multitude of the vanquished enemies; it is the word here used, *Hamonim, Hamonim*, expressed by way of admiration. O what vast multitudes of sinners will divine justice be glorified in the ruin of at that day! *A multitude of living* (saith one of the rabbins) *and a multitude of dead*, for Christ shall come to judge both the quick and the dead.

4. The amazing change that shall then be made in the kingdom of nature, ver. 15. *The sun and moon shall be darkened*; as before, chap. ii. 31. Their glory and lustre shall be eclipsed by the far greater brightness of that glory, in which the Judge shall then appear. Nay, they shall themselves be set aside in the dissolution of all things; for damned sinners in hell shall not be allowed their light, being cast into utter darkness; and glorified saints in heaven shall not need their light, for God himself will be their everlasting light, *Isa. lx. 19*. Those that fall under the wrath of God in that day of wrath, shall be cut off from all comfort and joy, signified by the darkening not only of sun and moon, but of the stars also.

5. The different impressions which that day will make upon the children of this world, and the children of God, according as it will be to them.

1. To the wicked it will be a terrible day. *The Lord* shall then speak from *Zion and Jerusalem*, i. e. from the throne of his glory, from heaven, where he manifests himself in a peculiar manner, as sometimes he had done in the *glorious high throne of his sanctuary*, which yet was but a faint resemblance of the glory of that day. He shall speak from heaven, from the midst of his saints and angels (so some understand it) the holy society of which may be called *Zion and Jerusalem*, for when we come to the *heavenly Jerusalem*, we come to the innumerable company of angels, see *Heb. xii. 22, 25*. Now his speaking in that day will be to the wicked as *roaring*, terrible as the roaring of a lion, for so the word signifies; he long kept silence, but now *our God shall come and shall not keep silence*, *Psal. l. 3, 21*. Note, The judgment of the great day, will make the ears of those to tingle that continue the implacable enemies of God's kingdom. God's voice will then *shake terribly both heaven and earth*, *Isa. ii. 21*. yet *once more*, *Hag. ii. 6*. *Heb. xii. 26*. This notes, that the voice of God will in the great day speak such terror to the wicked, as were enough to put even heaven and earth into a consternation. When God comes to pull down and destroy his enemies, and make them all his footstool, tho' heaven and earth should stand up in defence of them, and undertake their protection, it shall be all in vain, even they shall *shake* before him, and be an insufficient shelter to those whom he comes forth to contend with. Note, As blessings out of *Zion* are the sweetest blessings, and enough to make heaven and earth sing, so terrors out of *Zion* are the forest terrors, and enough to make *heaven and earth shake*.

2. To the righteous it will be a joyful day. When heaven and earth shall tremble, and be dissolved and burnt up, then will the Lord be the *hope of his people*, and the *strength of the children of Israel*, ver. 16. and then shall *Jerusalem be holy*, ver. 17. The saints are the *Israel of God*, they are his people, the church is his *Jerusalem*, they are in covenant and communion with him; now in the great day, (1.) Their longings shall be satisfied. *The Lord will be the hope of his people*, i. e. As he always was the founder and foundation of their hopes, so he then will be the crown of their hopes. He will be the *harbour* of his people, so the word is, their *receptacle, refuge, and home*. The saints in the great day shall arrive at the desired haven, shall put to shore after a stormy voyage; they shall go to be for ever at home with God; to their Father's house, the house *not made with hands*. (2.) Their happiness shall be confirmed; God will be in that day the *strength of the children of Israel*, enabling them to bid that day welcome, and to bear up under the weight of its glories and joys to them. In this world when the judgments of God are abroad, and sinners are falling under them, God is and will be the hope and strength of his people: the strength of their heart and their portion, when other mens hearts fail them for fear. (3.) Their holiness shall be completed, ver. 17. *Then shall Jerusalem be holy*, the holy city indeed, such shall the *heavenly Jerusalem* be, such the *glorious church*, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. *Jerusalem* shall be holiness, so the word is, it shall be perfectly holy, there shall be no remainder of sin in it. The gospel-church is a holy society, even in its militant state, but will never be holiness itself, till it comes to be triumphant. Then, *no stranger shall pass through*

through her any more, i. e. There shall not enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defiles or works iniquity; none shall be there but who have a right to be there, none but its own citizens; for it shall be an *unmixed* society. (4.) God shall in all this be manifested, and magnified. *So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God.* By the *sanctifying* and *glorifying* of the church, God *will be known* in his holiness and glory, as the God that dwells in his holy mountain, and makes it holy by dwelling in it; and they that are sanctified and glorified are so *through the knowledge of him* that called them. The knowledge which true believers have of God, is, (1.) An *appropriating* knowledge; they know that he is *the Lord their God*, yet not theirs only, but theirs in common with the whole church, that he is their God, but *dwelling in Zion his holy mountain*; for tho' faith *appropriates*, it doth not ingross or monopolize the privileges of the covenant. (2.) It is an *experimental* knowledge. They shall find him their *hope and strength* in the worst of times, and so they shall *know that he is the Lord their God*. Those know best the goodness of God, who have *tasted and seen* it, and have found him good to them.

18. ¶ And it shall come to pass in that day, *that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.* 19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom shall be a desolate wilderness, for the violence *against* the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land. 20. But Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation. 21. For I will cleanse their blood *that I have not cleansed*, for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

These promises with which this prophecy concludes, have their accomplishment in part, in the kingdom of grace; and the comforts and graces of all the faithful subjects of that kingdom, but will have their full accomplishment in the kingdom of glory, for as to the Jewish church, we know not of any event concerning that, which answers the extent of these promises; and what instances of peace and prosperity they were blessed with, which these may be supposed to be a hyperbolical description of, they were but figures of *better things reserved for us, that they in their best estate without us might not be made perfect.*

1. It is promised that the enemies of the church shall be vanquished and brought down, *ver. 19.* Egypt, that old enemy of Israel, and Edom that had an inveterate enmity to Israel, derived from Esau, these *shall be a desolation, a desolate wilderness*, no more to be inhabited, they are become the *people of God's curse*, so the Idumeans were, *Isa. xxxiv. 5.* No strength or wealth of a nation, is fence against the judgments of God. But what is the quarrel God has with these potent kingdoms? It is for their *violence against the children of Judah*, and the injuries they had done them; see *Ezek. xxv. 3, 8, 12, 15.*—*xxvi. 2.* They had *shed the innocent blood* of the Jews that fled to them for shelter, or were making their escape through their country. Note, The innocent blood of God's people is very precious to him, and not a drop of it shall be shed, but it shall be reckoned for. In the last day, this *earth* which has been *filled with violence* against the people of God, shall be made a desolation, when it and all the works that are therein shall be *burnt up*. And, sooner or later, the oppressors and persecutors of God's Israel will be brought down and laid *in the dust*, nay, they will at length be brought down and laid *in the flames*.

2. It is promised that the church shall be very happy, and truly happy it is in spiritual privileges, even during its *militant* state, but much more when it comes to be *triumphant*. Three things are here promised it.

1. *Purity.* That is put last here as a reason for the rest, *ver. 21.* But we may consider it *first* as the ground and foundation of the rest. *I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed*, i. e. their bloody heinous sins, especially shedding innocent blood; that filth and guilt they had contracted by sin, which rendred them unfit for communion with God, and made them odious to his holiness, and obnoxious to his justice; this they shall be *washed from* in the *fountain opened*, *Zech. xiii. 1.* That shall be

cleansed by the blood of Christ, which *could not be cleansed* by the sacrifices and purifications of the ceremonial law. Or if we apply it to the happiness of the future state, it speaks the cleansing of the saints from all these corruptions *from which* they were *not cleansed*, either by ordinances or providences in this world; there shall not be the least remains of sin in them there. Here, tho' they are washing daily, yet still there is something that is *not cleansed*; but in heaven, even that also shall be *done away*. And the reason is, because *the Lord dwells in Sion*, dwells with his church, and much more gloriously with that in heaven, and *holiness becomes his house for ever*, for which reason, where he dwells there must be, there shall be, a *perfection of holiness*. Note, Tho' the refining and reforming of the church is work that goes on slowly, and still there is something we complain of, that is *not cleansed*, yet there is a day coming, when every thing that is amiss shall be amended, and the church shall be *all fair*, and no spot, no stain, in her; and we must wait for that day.

2. *Plenty*; *ver. 18.* That is put first, because it speaks the reverse of the judgment threatened in the foregoing chapters. (1.) *The streams* of this plenty overflow the land, and enrich it; *The mountains shall drop new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk*, such great abundance shall they have of suitable provision, both for *babes and strong men*. It speaks the abundance of vineyards, and all fruitful; and the abundance of cattle in the pastures that fill them with milk. And to make the corn-land fruitful, *the rivers of Judah shall flow with water*, so that the country shall be like the garden of Eden, well watered every where, and greatly enriched, *Psal. lxxv. 9.* But this seems to be meant spiritually; the graces and comforts of the new covenant are compared to *wine and milk*, *Isa. lv. 1.* And the Spirit to *rivers of living water*, *John vii. 38.* And these gifts abound much more under the New Testament, than they did under the Old; when believers receive *grace for grace from Christ's fulness*, when they are enriched with *everlasting consolations*, and *filled with joy and peace in believing*, then the *mountains drop new wine, and the hills flow with milk*; *Drink ye, drink abundantly, O beloved.* When there is a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace, then the *rivers of Judah flow with water*, and make glad not only *the city of our God*, *Psal. xlv. 4.* but the whole land. (2.) The *fountain* of this plenty is in the *house of God*, thence the streams take their rise; as those *waters of the sanctuary*, *Ezek. xlvii. 1.* from *under the threshold of the house*, and the river of life out of *the throne of God and the Lamb*, *Rev. xxii. 1.* The apostle speaking of Zion, faith, *All my springs are in thee*, *Psal. lxxxvii. 7.* Those that take temporal blessings to be meant in the former part of the verse, yet by this *fountain out of the house of the Lord*, understand the grace of God, which, if we abound in temporal blessings, we have so much the more need of, that we may not abuse them. Christ himself is this fountain, his merit and grace cleanse us, refresh us, and make us fruitful. This here is said to water *the valley of Shittim*, which lay a great way off from the temple at Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, and was a dry and barren valley; which intimates, that gospel-grace flowing from Christ shall reach far even to the Gentile world, to the most remote regions of it, and shall make them to abound in the fruits of righteousness, which had long lain as the barren wilderness. This grace is a *fountain overflowing*, ever flowing, from which we may be continually *drawing*, and yet need not fear its being *drawn dry*. This fountain comes out of *the house of the Lord*, for those that would partake of the promised graces and comforts, must diligently and constantly attend upon instituted ordinances. And from *the house of the Lord* above, from his temple in heaven, flows all that good which here we are daily tasting the streams of, but hope to be *shortly*, hope to be *eternally*, drinking at the fountain head of.

3. *Perpetuity.* This crowns all the rest, *ver. 20.* *Judah shall dwell for ever*, (when Egypt and Edom are made a *desolation*) and Jerusalem shall continue *from generation to generation*. This is a promise, and a precious promise it is, (1.) That the church of Christ shall continue in the world to the end of time. As one generation of professing Christians passeth away, another shall come, in whom the *throne of Christ shall endure for ever*, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (2.) That all the living members of that church (Judah and Jerusalem are put for the *inhabitants* of that city and country, *Matth. iii. 5.*) shall be established in their happiness to the utmost ages of eternity. This new Jerusalem shall be *from generation to generation*, for it is a city that has foundations, not made with hands, but eternal in the heavens.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f A M O S.

Though this prophet appeared a little before Isaiah, yet he was not, as some have mistaken, that Amos, that was the father of Isaiah, (Isa. i. 1.) for in the Hebrew their names are very different; and their families too of a different character; for Isaiah was a courtier, Amos a country-farmer. Amos signifies a burthen, whence the Jews have a tradition, that he was of a slow tongue, and spoke with stammering lips; we may rather in allusion to his name say, that his speech was weighty, and his word the burthen of the Lord. He was (as most think) of Judah, yet prophesied chiefly against Israel, and at Bethel, chap. vii. 18. Some think his style favours of his extraction, and is more plain and rustick than that of some other of the prophets; I do not see it is so, but it is plain his matter agreed with that of his cotemporary Hosea, that out of the mouth of these two witnesses the word might be established. It appears by his contest with Amaziah the priest of Bethel, that he met with opposition in his work; but was a man of undaunted resolution in it, faithful and bold in reproofing sin, and denouncing the judgments of God for it, and pressing in his exhortations to repentance and reformation. He begins with threatenings against the neighbour-nations that were enemies to Israel, chap. i. and ii. Then calls Israel to account; and judgeth them for their idolatry, their unworthy walking under the favours God had bestowed upon them, and their incorrigibleness under his judgments, chap. iii. and iv. He calls them to repentance, chap. v. rejecting their hypocritical sacrifices, unless they did repent. He foretels the desolations that were coming upon them, notwithstanding their security, chap. vi. some particular judgments, chap. vii. particularly on Amaziah; and after other reproofs and threatenings, chap. viii. and ix. concludes with a promise of the setting up of the Messiah's kingdom, and the happiness of God's spiritual Israel therein; just as the prophecy of Joel concluded. These prophets having opened the wound in their reproofs and threatenings, which shew all wrong, in the promises of gospel-grace open the remedy, which alone will set all to rights.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have (1.) the general title of this prophecy, ver. 1. with the general scope of it, ver. 2. (2.) God's particular controversy with Syria, ver. 3—5. with Palestine, ver. 6—8. with Tyre, ver. 9, 10. with Edom, ver. 11, 12. and with Ammon, ver. 13—15. for their cruelty to his people, and the many injuries they had done them. This explains God's pleading with the nations, Joel iii. 2.

THE words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel, in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake. 2. And he said, The LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn, and the top of Carmel shall wither.

Here is, 1. The general character of this prophecy. It is *the words which the prophet saw*. Are words to be seen? Yes, God's words are; the apostles speak of the *word of life*, which they had not

not only heard, but which they had seen with their eyes; which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled, 1 John i. 1. such a real, substantial, thing is the word of God. The prophet saw these words; i. e. (1.) They were revealed to him in a vision, as John is said to see the voice that spake to him; Rev. i. 22. (2.) That which was foretold by them, was to him as certain, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes. It intimates how strong he was in that faith which is the evidence of things not seen.

2. The person by whom this prophecy was sent, Amos; who was among the herdsmen of Tekoa; and was one of them. Some think he was a rich dealer in cattle; the word is used concerning the king of Moab; 2 Kings iii. 4. He was a sheep-master; it is likely he got money by that business, and yet he must quit it to follow God as a prophet: Others think he was a poor keeper of cattle, for we find, chap. vii. 14, 15. that he was withal a gatherer of wild figs, a poor employment by which we may suppose he could but just get his bread, and that God took him, as he did David, from following the flock, and Elisha from following the plow. Many were trained up for great employments in the quiet, innocent, contemplative; business of shepherds. When God would send a prophet to reprove and warn his people, he employed a shepherd, a herdsman to do it, for they had made themselves as the horse and mule that have no understanding; nay, worse than the ox that knows his owner. God sometimes chuseth the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, 1 Cor. i. 27. Note; Those whom God has endued with abilities for his service, ought not to be despised or laid aside for the meanness either of their original, or of their beginnings. Tho' Amos himself is not ashamed to own that he was a herdsman, yet others ought not to upbraid him with it, or think the worse of him for it.

3. The persons concerned in the prophecy of this book; it is concerning Israel, the ten tribes, who were now ripened in sin, and ripening apace for ruin. God had raised them up prophets among themselves, chap. ii. 11. but they regarded them not, therefore God sends them one from Tekoa, in the land of Judah, that coming from another country he might be the more valued, and perhaps he was the rather sent out of his own country, because there he was despised for his having been a herdsman. See Mat. xiii. 55, 57.

4. The time when these prophecies were delivered. 1. The book is dated, as laws used to be, by the reigns of the kings under whom the prophet prophesied. It was in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, when the affairs of that kingdom went very well, and of Jeroboam the second king of Israel, when the affairs of that kingdom went pretty well; yet then they must both be told both of the sins they were guilty of, and the judgments that were coming upon them for those sins, that they might not with the present gleam of prosperity, flatter themselves either into an opinion of their innocency, or a confidence of their perpetual security.

2. It is dated by a particular event to which his prophecy had a reference; it was two years before the earthquake; that earthquake which is mentioned to have been in the days of Uzziah, Zech. xiv. 5. which put the nation into a dreadful fright, for it is there said they fled before it. But how could they flee from it? Some conjecture that this earthquake was at the time of Isaiah's vision, when the posts of the door were moved, Isa. vi. 4. The tradition of the Jews is, that it happened just at the time when Uzziah presumptuously invaded the priest's office, and went in to burn incense, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16. Josephus mentions this earthquake, Antiq. IX. 11. and saith, "That by it half of a mountain was removed and carried to a plain four furlongs off; and that it spoiled the king's gardens." God by this prophet gave warning of it two years before, that God by it would shake down their houses, chap. iii. 15.

5. The introduction to these prophecies, containing the general scope of them, ver. 2. The Lord will roar from Zion. His threatenings by his prophets, and the executions of those threatenings in his providence, will be as terrible as the roaring of a lion is to the shepherds and their flocks. Amos here speaks the same language with his contemporaries Hosea, chap. xi. 10. and Joel, chap. iii. 16. The lion roars before he tears; God gives warning before he strikes. Observe (1.) Whence the warning comes; from Zion and Jerusalem, from the oracles of God there delivered, for by them is thy servant warned, Psal. xix. 11. Our God, whose special residence is there, will issue out warrants, Given at that court, as it were, for the executing of judgments on the land. See Jer. xxv. 30. In Zion was the mercy-seat, thence the Lord roars; intimating that God's acts of justice are consistent with mercy, allayed and mitigated by mercy, nay, as they are warnings, they are really acts of mercy: We are chastened that we may not be condemned. (2.) What effect the warning hath, The habitations of the shepherds mourn, either because they fear the roaring lion; or, because they feel what is signified by that comparison, the consequences of a great drought, chap. iv. 7. which made the top of Carmel, of the most fruitful fields to wither, and become as a desert, Joel i. 12, 17.

3. Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four I will not turn away the

punishment thereof: because they have threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron. 4. But I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Ben-hadad. 5. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven; and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD. 6. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom. 7. But I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof. 8. And I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon, and I will turn mine hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord GOD. 9. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant. 10. But I will send a fire on the wall of Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof. 11. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Edom, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and kept his wrath for ever. 12. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of Bozrah. 13. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have ript up the women with child of Gilead, that they might enlarge their border. 14. But I will kindle a fire in the wall of Rabbah, and it shall devour the palaces thereof, with shouting in the day of battle, with a tempest in the day of the whirlwind. 15. And their king shall go into captivity, he and his princes together, saith the LORD.

What the Lord saith here, may be explained by what he saith, Jer. xii. 14. Thus saith the Lord, against all my evil neighbours that touch the inheritance of my people Israel, Behold I will pluck them out. Damascus was a near neighbour to Israel on the north, Tyre and Gaza on the west, Edom on the south, Ammon, and (in the next chapter) Moab on the east, and all of them had been one time, one way or other, pricking briars, and grieving thorns, to Israel, ill neighbours to them; and because God espouseth his peoples cause, he there calls them his evil neighbours, and here comes forth to reckon with them. The method taken in dealing with each of them is in part the same, and therefore we put them together, and yet in each there is something peculiar.

1. Let us see what is repeated, both by way of charge and by way of sentence, concerning them all. The controversy God has with each of them is prefaced with, Thus saith the Lord, Jehovah the God of Israel: Tho' those nations will not worship him as their God, yet they shall be made to know that they are accountable to him as their judge. The God of Israel is the God of the whole earth, and hath something to say to them that shall make them tremble. Against them the Lord roars out of Zion. And before God, by the prophet, threatens Israel and Judah, he denounceth judgments against these nations whom he made use of as scourges to them, for their being so; which might serve for a check to their pride and insolence, and a relief to his people under their dejections; for hereby they might see that God had not quitted his interest in them, and therefore might hope they had not lost their interest in him.

Now as to all these nations here arraigned,

1. The indictment drawn up against them all is thus far the same, (1.) That they are charged in general with three transgressions, and with four, i. e. with many transgressions; as by one or two we mean a few, so by three or four we mean many, as in Latin, a man that is very happy is said to be terque quaterque beatus; or with three and four, i. e. with seven, transgressions, a number of perfection; intimating that they have filled up the measure of their iniquities, and are ripe for ruin. Or, with three, i. e. a variety of sins, and with a fourth especially, which is specified concerning each of them, tho' the other three are not. As Prov. xxx. 15, 18, 21, 29. where we read of three things, yea four, generally one seems to be more especially intended. (2.) That the particular sin, which is fastened upon as the fourth, and which alone is instanced in, is the sin of persecution; it is some mischief or other done to the people of God, that is particularly

particularly charged upon every one of them; for persecution is the *measure-filling sin* of any people; and it is this sin that will be particularly reckoned for; *I was hungry, and you gave me no meat*, much more if it may be said, *I was hungry, and you took my meat from me*.

2. The judgment given against them all is thus far the same, (1.) That their sin being come to such a height, *God will not turn away the punishment thereof*, i. e. Tho' he has granted them a long reprieve, and has often *turned away their punishment*, yet now he will turn it away no longer, but justice shall take its course. *I will not revoke it*, so some read it, i. e. not recall the *voice* which is *gone forth* from Zion and Jerusalem, ver. 2. speaking death and terror to the sinful nations: It is an irrevocable sentence; God hath spoken it, and he will not *call it back*. Note, Tho' God bear long he will not bear *always* with those that provoke him; and when the decree *brings forth*, it will *bring up*. (2.) That God will *kindle a fire* among them; this is said concerning all these *ill neighbours*, ver. 4, 7, 10, 12, 14. God will *send a fire* into their cities: When fires are *kindled* that lay cities, towns, and houses, in ashes, whether designedly or casually, God must be acknowledged in it: They are of his *sending*; sin stirs up the fire of his jealousy, and that kindles other fires.

2. Let us see what is mentioned both by way of charge, and by way of sentence, that is peculiar to each of them; that every one may take his portion.

1. Concerning Damascus the head city of Syria, a kingdom that was oft vexatious to Israel. (1.) The *peculiar sin* of Damascus was using the Gileadites barbarously; they *threshed Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron*, ver. 3. which may be understood either literally, of their putting the inhabitants of Gilead to the torture, or to cruel deaths, whom they got into their hands; as David put the Ammonites under *saws*, and *barrows*, 2 Sam. xii. 31. we read with what inhumanity Hazael king of Syria, prosecuted his wars with Israel, 2 Kings viii. 12. he *dashed their children*, and *ripped up their women with child*; and see what desolations he made in their land, 2 Kings x. 32, 33. Or, it may be taken figuratively, for his laying the country waste, and this very similitude is used in the history of it, 2 Kings xiii. 7. he *destroyed them*, and *made them like the dust by threshing*. Note, Men often do that unjustly and wickedly, and shall be severely reckoned with for it, which yet God justly permits them to do. The church is called *God's threshing*, and the *corn of his floor*, Isa. xxi. 10. But if men make it *their threshing*, and the *chaff of their floor*, they shall be sure to hear of it. (2.) The *peculiar punishment* of Damascus is, (1.) That the fire which shall be sent shall fasten upon the court in the first place, not on the chief city, or the country towns, but on *the house of Hazael*, which he built, and *it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad*, i. e. the royal palaces inhabited by the kings of Syria, many of whom were of that name. Note, Even royal palaces are no fence against the judgments of God, tho' never so richly furnished, tho' never so strongly fortified. (2.) That the enemy shall force his way into the city; ver. 5. *I will break the bar of Damascus*; and then the gate flies open: Or, it may be understood figuratively; all that which is depended upon as the strength and safety of that great city shall fail, and prove insufficient. When God's judgments come with commission it is in vain to think of *turning them out*. (3.) That the people shall be destroyed with the sword; *I will cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven*, the *valley of idolatry*, for the gods of the Syrians were *gods of the vallies*, 1 Kings xx. 23. were worshipped in vallies; as the idols of Israel were worshipped on *the hills*: *him also that holdeth the sceptre of power*, some petty king or other that used to boast of the sceptre he held from Beth-Eden; the *house of pleasure*. Both those that were given to *idolatry*, and those that were given to *sensuality*, shall be *cut off* together. (4.) That the body of the nation shall be carried off. *The people shall go into captivity unto Kir*; which was in the country of the Medes: We find this fulfilled, 2 Kings xvi. 9. about fifty years after this, when the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin at the instigation of Ahaz king of Judah.

2. Concerning Gaza, a city of the Philistines, and now the metropolis of that country: (1.) The *peculiar sin* of the Philistines was *carrying away captive the whole captivity*, either of Israel or Judah, which some think refers to that inroad made upon Jehoram, when they took away *all the king's sons*, and *all his substance*, 2 Chron. xxi. 17. Or, perhaps to their seizing those that fled to them for shelter when Sennacherib invaded Judah, and *selling them to the Grecians*, Joel iii. 4, 6. or (as here) to the Edomites, who were always sworn enemies to the people of God. They spared none, but carried off all they could lay their hands on, designing, if possible, to *cut off the name of Israel*, Psal. lxxxiii. 4, 7. (2.) The *peculiar punishment* of the Philistines is, that the fire which God will send shall devour the palaces of Gaza, and that the *inhabitants* of the other cities of the Philistines Ashdod (or Azotus) Ashkelon, and Ekron, should all be *cut off*, and God would make as thorough work with them in their ruin, as they would have made with God's people, when they carried away the whole captivity, for even the *remnant* of them shall *perish*, ver. 8. No. lxxiv.

Note, God will make a *full end* of those that think to make a *full end* of his church and people.

3. Concerning Tyre, that famous city of wealth and strength, that was itself a kingdom, ver. 9. (1.) The *peculiar sin* of Tyre, is, *delivering up the whole captivity to Edom*, i. e. selling to the Edomites, those of Israel that fled to them for shelter, or any way fell into their hands; not caring what hardships they put upon them, so they could but make gain of them to themselves. Herein they forgot the *brotherly covenant*, the league that was between Solomon, and Hiram, king of Tyre, 1 Kings v. 12. which was so intimate, that Hiram called Solomon his brother, 2 Kings ix. 13. Note, It is a great aggravation of enmity and malice, when it is the violation of friendship, and of a *brotherly covenant*. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in the punishment of Tyre, but that *the palaces thereof* shall be *devoured*; which was done when Nebuchadnezzar took it after thirteen years siege. Their merchants were all princes, and their private houses were as palaces; but the *fire* shall make no more of them than cottages.

4. Concerning Edom, the posterity of Esau. (1.) Their *peculiar sin* was an unmerciful, unwearied pursuit of the people of God, and their taking all advantages against them to do them a mischief, ver. 11. He did *pursue his brother with the sword*, not only of old, when the king of Edom took up arms to oppose the children of Israel's passage through his border, Numb. xx. 18. but ever since upon all occasions; they had not strength and courage enough to face them in the field of battle; but whenever any other enemy had put Judah or Israel to flight, then the Edomites set in with the pursuers, fell upon the rear, slew those that were *half dead* already, and (as is usual with cowards when they have an enemy at an advantage) they did *cast off all pity*. Those that are least *courageous* are commonly most *cruel*; Edom was so; his malice *destroyed his compassion*, so the word is; he stripped himself of the tenderness of a man, and put on the fierceness of a beast of prey; and as such a one he did *tear*, his *anger did tear perpetually*. His cruelty was *insatiable*, and he never knew when he had sucked enough of the blood of Israel, but like the horse-leach still cried, *Give, give*. Nay, he *kept his wrath for ever*; when he wanted objects of his wrath, and opportunity to shew it, yet he kept it in reserve, it *rested in his bosom*, rolled it under his tongue as a sweet morsel, and had it ready to spit in the face of Israel upon the next occasion. Cursed be such cruel wrath, and anger so fierce, so outrageous; which makes men like the devil, who *continually seeks to devour*, and unlike to God, who *keepeth not his anger for ever*. Edom's malice was *unnatural*, for thus he pursued his brother, whom he ought to have protected: it was *hereditary*, as if it had been entailed upon the family, ever since Esau hated Jacob, and time itself could not wear it out, 'no nor the brotherly carriage of Israel towards them, Deut. ii. 4. and the express law given to Israel, Deut. xxiii. 7. *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother*. (2.) Here is nothing peculiar in their punishment; but, ver. 12. a *fire* shall be *sent to devour their palaces*. Note the fire of our anger against our brethren kindles the fire of God's anger against us.

5. Concerning the Ammonites, ver. 13, 14, 15. (1.) See how *violently* the fire of their anger turned against the people of God; they not only triumphed in their calamities, as we find, Ezek. xxv. 2, 6. but they did themselves use them barbarously, they *ripped up the women with child of Gilead*, a piece of cruelty, the very mention whereof strikes a horror upon one's mind; one would think it not possible that any of the *human race* should be so *inhuman*. Hazael was guilty of it, 2 Kings viii. 12. It was done not only in a *brutish* rage, which falls without consideration upon all that comes before it, but with a *devilish* design to extirpate the race of Israel, by killing not only all that were *born*, but all that were *to be born*, worse than Egyptian cruelty. It was *that they might enlarge their border*, that they might make the land of Gilead their own, and there might be none to lay claim to it, or give them any disturbance in the possession of it. We find, Jer. xlix. 1. that the Ammonites *inherited Gad*, i. e. Gilead, under pretence that Israel had *no sons*, *no heirs*. We know how heavy their doom was, and how heinous their crime, who said, *This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours*, by occupancy. See what cruelty covetousness is the cause of; and what horrid practices those are often put upon that are greedy to *enlarge their own border*. (2.) See how *violently* the fire of God's anger burned against them; shall not God visit for these things done to any of mankind, especially when they are done to his own people? *shall not his soul be avenged on such a nation as this*? No doubt it shall. The fire shall be kindled *with shouting in the day of battle*, i. e. war shall kindle the fire, it shall be a *fire* accompanied with the *sword*, or a roaring fire, which shall make a noise like that of soldiers ready to engage. And it shall be as a *tempest* in the *day of the whirlwind* which comes swiftly, furiously, and bears down all before it. Or, this *tempest* and *whirlwind* shall be as bellows to the fire, to make it burn the stronger, and spread the further. It is particularly threatened that *their king and his princes shall go together into captivity*, carried away by the king of Babylon, not long after Judah was. See what changes God's providence often

often makes with men, or rather their own sin; *kings become captives, and princes prisoners. Milchem shall go into captivity*; some understand it of the god of the Ammonites, whom they called Moloch; a king; *he and his princes, and his priests that attended him, shall go into captivity*: their idol shall be so far from protecting them, that it shall itself go into captivity with them. Note, Those, who by violence and fraud seek to enlarge *their own border*, will justly be expelled and excluded their own border; nor is it strange if those who make no conscience of invading others rights, be able to make no resistance against those that invade theirs.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter (1.) God, by the prophet, proceeds in a like controversy with Moab, as before with other nations, ver. 1—3. (2.) He shews what quarrel he had with Judah, ver. 4, 5. (3.) He at length begins his charge against Israel, to which all that goes before is but an introduction. Observe (1.) The sins they are charged with, *injustice, oppression, whoredom*, ver. 6—8. (2.) The aggravations of those sins; the temporal and spiritual mercies God had bestowed upon them, for which they had made him such ungrateful returns, ver. 9—12. (3.) God's complaint of them for their sins, ver. 13. and his threatenings of their ruin, and their utter inability to prevent it, ver. 14—16.

1. **T**HUS saith the LORD, for three transgressions of Moab, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because he burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime. 2. But I will send a fire upon Moab, and it shall devour the palaces of Kirioth, and Moab shall die with tumult, with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet. 3. And I will cut off the judge from the midst thereof, and will slay all the princes thereof with him, saith the LORD. 4. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, for three transgressions of Judah, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept his commandments, and their lyes caused them to err, after the which their fathers have walked. 5. But I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem. 6. ¶ Thus saith the LORD, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes. 7. That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name. 8. And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge, by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

Here is, 1. The judgment of Moab, another of the nations that bordered upon Israel. They are reckoned with, and shall be punished for three transgressions and for four, as those before. Now (1.) Moab's fourth transgression, as theirs who were before set to the bar, was *cruelty*; the instance given refers not to the people of God, but to a heathen like themselves: The king of Moab burnt the bones of the king of Edom into lime. We find there was war between the Edomites and the Moabites, in which the king of Moab in distress and rage offered his own son for a burnt-offering to appease his deity, 2 Kings iii. 26, 27. And it should seem that afterwards he or some of his successors, in revenge upon the Edomites for bringing him to that extremity, having an advantage against the king of Edom, either seized him alive and burnt him to ashes, or slew him and burnt his body, or digged up the bones of their dead king, of that particularly who had so straitened him, and, in token of his rage and fury, burnt them to lime, and perhaps made use of the powder of his bones for the white-washing of the walls and cieling of his palace, that he might please himself with the sight of that monument of his revenge. *Est vindicta bonum vitâ jucundius ipsâ*. It is barbarous to abuse human bodies, for we ourselves also are in the body; it is senseless to abuse dead bodies, nay, it is impious, for we believe, and look for their resurrection. And to abuse the dead bodies of kings (whose persons and names ought to be in a particular manner respected and had in veneration) is an affront to majesty; it is an argument of a base spirit for those to trample upon a dead lion, who, were he alive, would tremble before him. (2.) Moab's doom for this transgression is (1.) A judgment of death: those that deal cruelly shall be cruelly dealt with, ver. 2. Moab shall

die, the Moabites shall be cut off with the sword of war, which kills with tumult, with shouting, and with sound of trumpet, circumstances that make it so much the more terrible; as the lion's roaring aggravates his tearing, every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, Isa. ix. 5. (2.) It is a judgment upon their judge, who had passed the sentence upon the bones of the king of Edom, that they should be burnt to lime, I will cut him off, saith God, ver. 3. he shall know there is a judge that is higher than he. The king, the chief judge, and all the inferior judges and princes shall be cut off together. If the people sometimes suffer for the sins of their princes, yet the princes themselves shall not escape, Jer. xlviii. 47. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

2. Judah also is a near neighbour to Israel; and therefore now justice is riding the circuit, that shall not be passed by; that nation had made itself like the heathen, and mingled itself with them, and therefore the indictment here runs against them in the same form in which it had run against all the rest; for three transgressions of Judah, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, their sins are as many as the sins of other nations, and we find them huddled up with them in the same character, Jer. ix. 26, Egypt and Judah and Edom, jumble them together, they are all alike; the sentence here also is the same, ver. 5. I will send a fire upon Judah, tho' it is the land where God is known, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, tho' it is the holy city, and God has been known in its palaces for a refuge, when time was, Psal. xlviii. 3. But the sin here charged upon Judah is different from all the rest. The other nations were reckoned with for injuries done to men, but Judah is reckoned with for indignities done to God, ver. 4. (1.) They put contempt upon his statutes; and persisted in disobedience to them; they have despised the law of the Lord, as if it were not worth taking notice of, nor had any thing in it valuable: and herein they despised the wisdom, justice, and goodness, as well as the authority and sovereignty of the Law-maker; this they did in effect when they kept not his commandments, made no conscience of them, took no care about them; (2.) They put honour upon his rivals, their idols, here called their lyes, which caused them to err; for an image is a teacher of lyes, Hab. ii. 18. And they that are led away into the error of idolatry, are by that led into a multitude of other errors, *Uno dato absurdo mille sequuntur*. God is an infinite eternal spirit; but when that truth of God is by idolatry changed into a lye, all his other truths are in danger of being so changed likewise: thus their idols caused them to err, and God justly gave them up to strong delusions; nor was it any excuse for their sin, that they were the lyes after which their father walked, for they should rather have taken warning, than taken pattern by those that perished with these lyes in their right hand.

3. We now at length come to the words which Amos saw concerning Israel; the reproofs and threatenings having walked the round, here they centre, here they settle. He begins with them as with the rest, For three transgressions of Israel, and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof, if all these nations must be punished for their iniquities, shall Israel go unpunished? Observe here, what their sins were for which God would reckon with them.

1. *Perverting justice*: This was the sin of those who were intrusted with the administration of justice, the judges and magistrates, and all parties concerned: they made nothing of selling a righteous man, and his righteous cause, when it came to be tried before them, for a piece of silver sentence was passed, not according to the merits of the cause, but the bribe always turned the scale, and judgment was set to sale by auction, to the highest bidder. They would sell the life and livelihood of a poor man for a pair of shoes, for the least advantage to themselves that could be proposed to them; give them but a pair of shoes, and the cause of a poor man, who could not give them so much as that, should be betrayed, and left at the mercy of those that will have no mercy; they will rather play at small game than sit out; for a piece of bread such a man will transgress. Note, Those that will wrong their consciences for any thing, will come at length to do it for next nothing, that begin to sell justice for silver, will, in time, be so fordid as to sell it for a pair of shoes, for a pair of old shoes.

2. *Oppressing the poor*, and seeking to benefit themselves by doing them a mischief: They pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor; they swallow up the poor, with the utmost greediness, and make a prey of them that are in sorrow, with dust on their heads, poor orphans that are in mourning for their parents, they catch at them to get their estates into their hands: they never rest till they have got the heads of the poor in the dust, to be trodden on. Or, they pant after the dust of the earth, i. e. silver and gold, white and yellow dust, they covet it earnestly, and levy it upon the head of the poor, by their unjust exactions. Note, Mens seeking to enrich themselves by the impoverishing of others, is a transgression which God will not long turn away the punishment of. This is turning aside the way of the meek, contriving to do injury to those that they know are mild and patient and will bear injury. They invade their rights, break their measures, and obstruct the course of justice in favour of them, not suffering them to go on with their righteous cause; this

this is *turning aside their way*. Note, The more patiently men bear the injuries that are done them, the greater is the sin of those that injure them, and the more occasion they have to expect that God will right them, and take vengeance for them: *I as a deaf man heard not, and then thou wilt hear*.

3. *Abominable uncleanness*, even incest itself, such as is not named among the Gentiles, that *a man should have his father's wife*, 1 Cor. v. 1. his father's concubine, *a man and his father will go in unto the same young woman*, as black an instance as any other of an unbounded promiscuous lust; and yet where the former iniquities of oppression and extortion are, this also is found; for laws of modesty seldom hold those that have broke the bands of justice, and *cast away its cords* from them. This wickedness is such a scandal to religion and the profession of it, that they who are guilty of it, are looked upon as designing thereby to *profane God's holy name*, and to render it odious among the heathen, as if he countenanced the villainies, which those who pretend relation to him allow themselves in, and were altogether such a one as they.

4. *Regaling themselves, and yet pretending to honour their God* with that which they had got by *oppression and extortion*, ver. 8. They add idolatry to their injustice, and then think to atone for their injustice with their idolatry. (1.) They *make merry* with that which they have unjustly *squeezed* from the poor. They *lay themselves down at ease*, and in *state*, and stretch themselves upon *clothes laid to pledge*, which they ought to have restored the same night, according to the law, Deut. xxiv. 12, 13. And they *drink the wine of the condemned*, of such as they have fined and laid heavy mulcts upon; spending that in sensuality which they have got by injustice. (2.) They think to make atonement for this, by feasting on the gains of oppression *before their altars*, and *drinking this wine in the house of their god*, in the temples where they worshipped their calves, as if they would make God a *partner in their crimes*, by making him a *partner of the profits* of them, service good enough for false gods; but the true God will not thus be mocked: he has declared he *hates robbery for burnt-offerings*, and cannot be served acceptably but with that which is got honestly.

9. ¶ Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height *was* like the height of the cedars, and he *was* strong as the oaks, yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath. 10. Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. 11. And I raised up of your sons for prophets, and of your young men for Nazarites. *Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* saith the LORD. 12. But ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink, and commanded the prophets, saying, Prophecy not. 13. Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed *that is full of sheaves*. 14. Therefore the flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not strengthen his force, neither shall the mighty deliver himself. 15. Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow, and *he that is swift of foot* shall not deliver himself, neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself. 16. And *he that is courageous among the mighty* shall flee away naked in that day, saith the LORD.

Here, 1. God puts his people Israel in mind of the great things he had done for them in putting them into possession of the land of Canaan, the greatest part of which these ten tribes now enjoyed, ver. 9, 12. Note, We need often to be minded of the *mercies* we have *received*, which are the heaviest aggravations of the *sins* we have *committed*. God gives liberally, and upbraids us not with our meanness and unworthiness, and the disproportion between his gift, and our merits; but he justly upbraids us with our ingratitude, and ill requital of his favours, and tells us what he has done for us to shame us for not rendring again according to the benefit done to us. *Son, remember, Israel, remember*, (1.) That God brought thee out of a house of bondage, rescued thee out of the *land of Egypt*, where else thou hadst perished in slavery. (2.) That he led thee *forty years* through a desert land, and fed thee in a *wilderness*, where else thou hadst perished with hunger. *Mercies to our ancestors* were *mercies to us*, for if they had been cut off we had not been. (3.) That he made room for them in Canaan, by extirpating the natives, by a series of wonders, little inferior to those by which they were redeemed out of Egypt: *I destroyed the Amorite before them*, here put for all the devoted nations: Observe the *magnificence* of the enemies that stood in their way, which is taken notice of that God may be the more *magnified* in the subduing of them; they were of *great stature*, his *height was like the height of the cedars*, and the people of Israel were as shrubs to them: And of *great strength*, not only tall but well-set, he was *strong as the oaks*; their kingdom was *eminent* among the nations, and over-topped all its neighbours, the supports and defences of it

seemed impregnable, it was as *fine* as the *stately cedar*, it was as *firm* as the *sturdy oak*, yet when God had a *vine* to plant there, (Psal. lxxx. 8, 9.) this Amorite is not only cut down, but plucked up, *I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath*, so that the Amorites were no more a nation, nor ever read of any more: Thus highly did God value Israel, he gave men *for them, and people for their life*, Isa. xliii. 4. How ungrateful then were they, who put such contempt upon him! (4.) That he made them *possess the land of the Amorite*, not only put it into their hands, so that they became masters of it *jure belli*, but gave them a better title to it, so that it became theirs *by promise*.

2. He likewise upbraids them with the spiritual privileges and advantages they enjoyed, as a holy nation, ver. 11. They had *helps for their souls*, which taught them how to make a good use of their temporal enjoyments, and were therefore more valuable. It is true, the *ten tribes* had not God's temple, altar, and priesthood, and it was their own fault that they *deserted* them, and for that they might justly have been left in utter darkness; but God *left not himself without witness*, or them without guides, to shew them the way: (1.) They had *prophets* that were *powerful instructors* in piety, divinely inspired, and commissioned to make known the mind of God to them, to shew them what is pleasing to God, and what displeasing; to reprove them for their faults, and warn them of their danger; to direct them in their difficulties, and comfort them in their troubles. God *raised them up* prophets, spirited them for that work, and employed them in it. He raised them up *of their sons*, from among themselves, as Moses and Christ were, raised up *from among their brethren*, Deut. xviii. 15. It was an honour put upon their nation, and upon their families that they had children of their own to be God's messengers to them, of their own language, not strangers sent from another country, whom they might suspect to be prejudiced against them and their land, but those whom they knew wished well to them. Note, Faithful ministers are great blessings to any people, and it is God that raiseth them up to be so, and they may justly be reckoned an honour to the families they are of. (2.) They had Nazarites that were *bright examples* of piety; *I raised up of your young men for Nazarites*, men that bound themselves by a vow to God and his service, and in pursuance of that denied themselves many of the lawful delights of sense, as drinking wine, and eating grapes: There were some of their *young men* that were in their prime for the enjoyment of the pleasures of this life, and yet voluntarily *abridged* themselves of them; these God *raised up* by the power of his grace, to be *monuments of his grace*, to his glory, and to be his witnesses against the impieties of that degenerate age. Note, It is as great a blessing to any place to have eminent good *Christians* in it, as to have eminent good *ministers* in it; for so they have examples to their rules. We must acknowledge, that it bodes well to any people when God raiseth up numbers of hopeful young people among them; when he makes their *young men Nazarites*, devout and conscientious, and mortified to the pleasures of sense, and those that are such Nazarites are *purer than snow, whiter than milk*, they are indeed the *polite young men*, for their *polishing is of sapphires*, Lam. iv. 7. They that have such men, such young men among them, have therein such an advantage both for direction and encouragement to be religious, as they will be called to an account for another day, if they do not improve. Israel is here reckoned with, not only for the prophets, but for the Nazarites raised up among them. Concerning the truth of this he appeals to themselves, *Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel?* Can you deny it? Have not you your selves been sensible of the advantage you had by the *prophets* and Nazarites raised up among you? Note, Sinners own consciences will be witnesses for God, that he has not been wanting to them in the means of grace, so that if they perish it is because they have been wanting to themselves in not improving those means. The men of Judah shall themselves *judge between God and his vineyard*, whether he could have *done more for it*, Isa. v. 3, 4.

3. He chargeth them with the abuse of the means of grace they enjoyed, and the opposition they gave to God's designs in affording them those means, ver. 12. They were so far from *walking in the light* that they *rebelled against it*, and did what they could to extinguish it, that it might not shine in their faces to their conviction. (1.) They did what they could to *debauch good people*; to draw them off from their seriousness in devotion, and their strictness in conversation, *ye gave the Nazarites wine to drink* contrary to their vow, that having broken it in that instance they might not pretend to keep it in any other. Some they surprized or allured into it, and *with their much fair speech* caused them to yield; others they forced and frightened into it, reproached and threatened them, if they were more *precise* than their neighbours; and by drawing them in to *drink wine* they spoiled them for Nazarites. Note, Satan and his agents are very busy to corrupt the minds of young people that look heavenward, and many that we thought would have been Nazarites, they have overcome by *giving them wine to drink*; by drawing them in to the love of mirth and pleasure, and drinking company; multitudes of young men that bid fair for eminent professors of religion have *erred through wine*, and been undone for ever. And how do the factors for hell triumph in the debauching

ing of a Nazarite! (2.) They did what they could to silence good ministers, and to stop their mouths; ye commanded the prophets saying, *Prophecy not*, and threatened them if they did prophecy, chap. vii. 12. as if God's messengers were bound to observe your orders, and might not deliver their errand unless you gave them leave, and so you not only received the grace of God in raising up those prophets in vain, but put the highest affront imaginable upon that God in whose name the prophets spoke. Note, Those have a great deal to answer for that cannot bear faithful preaching, and those much more that suppress it.

4. He complains of the wrong they did him by their sins, ver. 13. *I am pressed under you, I am straitened by you, and know not what to do*, Hof. xi. 8, 9. *I am loaded and burthened by you, and can no longer bear it, and therefore I will ease me of my adversaries*, Isa. i. 24. *I am pressed under you, and the load of your sins, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves, is loaded with corn, in the midst of the joy of harvest, as long as any will lie on*. Note, The great God complains of sin, especially the sins of his professing people as a burthen to him. He is grieved with this generation, Plal. xcv. 10. *is broken with their whorish heart*, Ezek. vi. 9. A consideration which if it make not the sinner's repentance very deep, it will make his ruin very great. The great God that upholds the world, and never complains that he is pressed under the weight of it, he fainteth not, neither is weary, yet complains of the sins of Israel, yea and of their hypocritical services too, that he is weary of bearing them, Isa. i. 14. No wonder the creature groans being burthened, Rom. viii. 22. when the Creator saith, *I am pressed under them*.

5. He threatens them with unavoidable ruin. And so some read, ver. 13. *Behold I will press, or straiten, your place, as a cart full of sheaves presseth*; they shall be loaded with judgments till they shall sink under them, and shall make a noise, as a cart overloaded doth. They that will not submit to the convictions of the word, that will neither be won by that, nor by the conversation of those about them, shall be made to sink under the weight of God's judgments. If God load us daily with his benefits, and we notwithstanding that load him with our sins, how can we expect any other but that he should load us with his judgments? And it is here threatened in the three last verses, that when God comes forth to contend with this provoking people, they shall not be able to stand before him, to flee from him, or to make their part good with him; for when God judgeth he will overcome. Tho' his patience be tired out, his power is not, and so the sinner shall find to his cost. When the Assyrian army comes to lay the country waste by sword and captivity, none shall escape, but every one shall have his share in the common desolation. (1.) It will be in vain to think of fleeing from the enemy that comes armed with a commission to make all desolate. The flight shall perish from the swift; those that have been famed for happy escapes and happy retreats, their arts shall now fail them; they shall have no time to flee, or shall find no way to take; or they shall have no strength or spirit to attempt it. They shall be at their wit's end, and then they are soon at their flight's end. Are they as Asahel, as swift of foot as a wild roe? 2 Sam. ii. 18. yet like him they shall run the faster upon their own destruction, *he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself*, ver. 15. Or, do they say, as those, Isa. xxx. 16. *We will flee upon horses, and we will ride upon the swift, yet they shall be overtaken, neither shall he that rideth the horse deliver himself from the pursuers: A horse is a vain thing for safety*. (2.) It will be in vain to think of fighting it out. God is at war with them, and are they stronger than he? Is there any military force that can pretend to be a match for omnipotence? No, the strong shall not strengthen his force. He that has a habit of strength, shall not be able to exert it, when he has occasion for it. And the mighty who should protect and deliver others, shall not be able to deliver himself, to deliver his soul, so the word is, shall not save his life; let not the strong man then glory in his strength, nor trust in it, but strengthen himself in the Lord his God, for in him is everlasting strength. And as the bodily strength shall fail, so shall the weapons of war, the armour as well as the arm shall become insufficient, neither shall he stand that handles the bow, tho' he stand at a distance, but shall betake himself to flight, and not trust to his own bow to save him; tho' the arm were never so strong, and the armour never so well fixed, neither will avail when the spirit fails, ver. 16. *He that is courageous among the mighty, that used to look danger in the face and not be dismayed at it, he shall flee away naked in that day, not only disarmed, having thrown away his weapons both offensive and defensive, but plundered of his treasure, which he thought to have carried away with him, and he shall think it as much as bargain, that he has his life for a prey*. Thus when God pleaseth, he taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them who used to boast of their courage, and their daring enterprizes in the field to wander and sneak in a wilderness where there is no way, Job xii. 24.



C H A P. III.

A stupid, senseless, heedless people, are in this chapter called upon to take notice (1.) Of the judgments of God denounced against them, and the warnings he gave them of these judgments; and to be hereby awakened out of their security, ver. 1—8. (2.) Of the sins that were found among them, by which God was provoked thus to threaten, thus to punish, that they might justify God in his controversy with them, and unless they repented and reformed, might expect no other but that God should proceed in his controversy, ver. 9—15.

1. **H**ear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, 2. You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. 3. Can two walk together, except they be agreed? 4. Will a lion rore in the forest, when he hath no prey? will a young lion cry out of his den, if he have taken nothing? 5. Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth where no gin is for him? shall one take up a snare from the earth, and have taken nothing at all? 6. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it? 7. Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. 8. The lion hath rored, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophecy?

The scope of these verses is to convince the people of Israel that God had a controversy with them; that which the prophet has to say to them is, to let them know that the Lord hath something to say against them, ver. 1. They were his peculiar people above others, knew his name, and were called by it, nevertheless he hath something against them, and they are called to hear what it is, that they may consider what answer they shall make; as the prisoner at the bar is bid to hearken to his indictment. The children of Israel would not regard the words of counsel and comfort that God had many a time spoken to them, and now they shall be made to hear the word of reproof and threatening that the Lord hath spoken against them; for He will act as He hath spoken.

1. Let them know that the gracious cognizance God had taken of them, and the favours he had bestowed upon them, should not exempt them from the punishment due to them for their sins. It is a family that God brought up out of the land of Egypt, ver. 1. and it was no more but a family when it went down thither; thence God delivered it, thence he fetched it to be a family to himself. It is not only the ten tribes, the kingdom of Israel that must take notice of this, but that of Judah also, for it is spoken against the whole family, that God brought up out of Egypt: It is a family that God has bestowed distinguishing favours upon, as owned in a peculiar manner, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth*. Note, God's church in the world is a family dignified above all the families of the earth: those that know God are known of him; in Judah is God known, and therefore Judah is more than any people known of God. God has known them, i. e. he has chosen them, covenanted with them, and conversed with them as his acquaintance.

Now one would think it should follow, therefore I will spare you, will connive at your faults, and excuse you, No, therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. Note, The distinguishing favours of God to us, if they do not serve to restrain us from sin, shall not serve to exempt us from punishment: nay, the nearer any are to God in profession, and the kinder notice he has taken of them, the more surely, the more quickly, and the more severely will he reckon with them, if they by a course of wilful sin profane their character, disgrace their relation to him, violate their engagements, and put a slight upon the favours and honours with which they have been distinguished. Therefore they shall be punished, because their sins dishonour him, affront him, and grieve him more than the sins of others; and because it is necessary that God should vindicate his own honour, by making it appear that he hates sin, and hates it most in those that are nearest to him; if they be but as bad as others, they shall be punished as worse than others, because it is justly expected they should be so much better than others: judgment begins at the house of God, begins at the sanctuary, for God will be sanctified either by or upon those that come nigh unto him, Lev. x. 3.

2. Let them know, that they could not expect any comfortable communion with God, unless they first made their peace with him, ver. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* No,

No, how should they? Where there is not friendship there can be no fellowship; if two persons be at variance, they must first accommodate the matters in difference between them, before there can be any interchanging of good offices. Israel had affronted God, had broken their covenant with him, and ill requited his favours to them, and yet they expected he should continue to *walk with them*, should take their part, act for them, and give them assurances of his presence with them, tho' they took no care by repentance and reformation to *agree with their adversary* and to turn away his wrath; but how can that be? saith God, while you continue to *walk contrary to God*, you can look for no other but that he should *walk contrary to you*, Lev. xxvi. 23. Note, We cannot expect that God should be present with us, or act for us, unless we be reconciled to him. God and man cannot *walk together, except they be agreed; unless we agree with God* in our end, which is his glory, we cannot *walk with him by the way*.

3. Let them know, that the warnings God gave them of judgments approaching were not causeless and groundless, merely to amuse them, but certain declarations of the wrath of God against them, which (if they did not speedily repent) they would infallibly feel the effects of, *ver. 4. Will a lion roar in the forest when he has no prey in view? No, he roars upon his prey; nor will a young lion cry out of his den, if the old lion have taken nothing to bring home to him: nor would God thus give you warning both by the threatenings of his word, and by lesser judgments, if you had not by your sins made your selves a prey to his wrath, nor if he were not really about to fall upon you with desolating, destroying, judgments. Note, The threatenings of the word and providence of God are not bugbears to frighten children and fools, but are certain inferences from the sin of man, and certain prefaces of the judgments of God.*

4. Let them know, that as their own wickedness was the procuring cause of these judgments, so they shall not be removed till they have done their work, *ver. 5. When God is come forth to contend with a sinful people, it is necessary they should understand, (1.) That it is their own sin that has entangled them; for can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him? No, nature doth not lay snares for the creatures, but the art of men; a bird is not taken in a snare by chance, but with the fowler's design; so the providence of God prepares trouble for sinners, and it is in the work of their own hands that they are snared; affliction doth not spring out of the dust, but it is God's justice, and our own wickedness, that corrects us. (2.) It is nothing but their own repentance that can disentangle them; for shall one take up a snare from the earth which he laid with design, except he have taken something as he designed? so neither will God remove the affliction he hath sent, till it have done its work, and accomplished that for which he sent it. If our hearts be duly humbled, and we are brought by our afflictions to confess and forsake our sins, then the snare has taken something, then the point is gained, the end is answered, and then, and not till then, the snare is broken, is taken up from the earth, and we are delivered in love and mercy.*

5. Let them know, that all their troubles came from the hand of God's providence, and from the counsel of his will, *ver. 6. Shall there be evil in a city, in a family, in a nation, and the Lord has not done it? appointed it, and performed what he appointed? The evil of sin is from ourselves, it is our own doing; but the evil of trouble, personal or publick, is from God, and is his doing; whoever are the instruments, God is the principal agent; Out of his mouth both evil and good proceed.*

This consideration, That whatever evil is in the city, the Lord has done it, should engage us patiently to bear our share in publick calamities, and to study to answer God's intention in them.

6. Let them know, that their prophets who give them warning of judgments approaching, deliver nothing to them but what they have received from the Lord, to be delivered to his people. (1.) God makes it known beforehand to the prophets, *ver. 7. Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, none of that evil in the city spoken of, ver. 6. but he reveals it to his servants the prophets, tho' to others it is a secret. Therefore they know not what they do, who make light of the warnings, which the prophets give them in God's name. Observe, God's prophets are his servants, whom he employs to go on his errands to the children of men. The secret of God is with them; it is in some sense with all the righteous, Prov. iii. 32. with all that fear God, Psal. xxv. 14. But in a peculiar manner with the prophets, to whom the Spirit of prophecy is a Spirit of revelation.*

It had put honour enough upon prophets if it had been only said, that sometimes God is pleased to reveal to his prophets what he designs to do; but it speaks something very great to say he doth nothing but he reveals it to them, as if they were the men of his counsel. Shall I hide from Abraham, who is a prophet, the thing which I do? Gen. xviii. 18. God will therefore be sure to reckon with those who put contempt on the prophets whom he puts this honour upon. (2.) The prophets cannot but make that known to the people which God has made known to them, *ver. 8. The Lord God hath spoken who can but prophesy? his prophets to whom he hath spoken in secret by dreams and visions,*

No. lxxiv.

cannot but speak in publick to the people what they have heard from God. They are so full of those things themselves, so well assured concerning them, and so much affected with them; that they cannot but speak of them; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak, *I believed, therefore have I spoken*, Acts iv. 20. Nay, and besides the prophetick impulse which went along with the inspiration, and made the word like a fire in their bones, Jer. xx. 9. they received a command from God to deliver what they had been charged with, and they had been false to their trust, if they had not done it. *Necessity was laid upon them* as upon the preachers of the gospel, 1 Cor. ix. 16.

7. Let them know, that they ought to tremble before God; upon the fair warning he had given them; as they would (1.) Upon the sounding of a trumpet, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, that all may stand upon their guard, and stand to their arms. Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid, or run together? as some read it, *ver. 6. Will they not presently come together in a fright to consider what is best to be done for the common safety? Yet when God by his prophets gives them notice of their danger, and summons them to come and list themselves under his banner, it makes no impression; they will sooner give credit to a watchman on their walls than to a prophet sent of God; will sooner obey the summons of the governor of their city, than the orders given them by the Governor of the world. God saith, Harken to the voice of the trumpet, but they will not hearken; nay, and they tell him plainly that they will not, Jer. vi. 17. (2.) Upon the roaring of a lion. God is sometimes as a lion, and a young lion to the house of Judah, Hof. iv. 14. the lion roars before he tears; thus, God warns before he wounds; if therefore the lion roars upon a poor traveller, as he did against Samson, Judg. xiv. 5. he cannot but be put into a mighty consternation, yet the Lord roars out of Zion, chap. i. 2. and none are afraid, but they go on securely, as if they were in no danger. Note, The fair warning given to a careless world, if it be not taken, will aggravate its condemnation another day. The lion roared, and they were not moved with fear to prepare an ark. O the amazing stupidity of an unbelieving world, that will not be wrought upon, no, not by the terrors of the Lord!*

9. ¶ Publish in the palaces at Ashdod, and in the palaces in the land of Egypt, and say, Assemble yourselves upon the mountains of Samaria: and behold the great tumults in the midst thereof, and the oppressed in the midst thereof. 10. For they know not to do right, saith the LORD; who store up violence and robbery in their palaces. 11. Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, An adversary there shall be even round about the land; and he shall bring down thy strength from thee, and thy palaces shall be spoiled. 12. Thus saith the LORD, As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria, in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. 13. Hear ye and testify in the house of Jacob, saith the Lord GOD, the God of hosts, 14. That in the day that I shall visit the transgressions of Israel upon him, I will also visit the altars of Beth-el, and the horns of the altar shall be cut off, and fall to the ground. 15. And I will smite the winter-house with the summer-house, and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD.

Israel is here again convicted and condemned, and particular notice given of the crimes they are convicted of, and the punishments they are condemned to.

1. Notice is given of it to their neighbours. The prophet is ordered to publish it in the palaces of Ashdod, one of the chief cities of the Philistines; nay the summons must go further, even to the palaces in the land of Egypt, the great men of both those nations that dwell in the palaces, that are inquisitive concerning the affairs of the neighbour-nations, and are conversant with the publick intelligence, let them assemble themselves upon the mountains of Samaria, *ver. 9. There, upon a throne high and lifted up, the judgment is set, Samaria is the criminal that is to be tried, let them be present at the trial, for it shall be (as trials use to be) publick, in the face of the country, let them make an appointment to meet there from all parts, to judge between God and his vineyard; God appeals to all impartial righteous men, Ezek. xxiii. 45. They will all subscribe to the equity of his proceedings, when they see how the case stands. Note, God's controversies with sinners do not fear a scrutiny: even Philistines and Egyptians will be made to see and say, That the ways of the Lord are equal, but our ways are unequal. They are likewise summoned to attend, not only that they may justify God, and be witnesses for him that he deals fairly, but that they may themselves take warning, for if judgment begin at the house of God, as they see it doth,*

doth, what shall be the end of those that are strangers to him? *1 Pet. iv. 17. If this be done in a green tree, what shall be done in a dry?* Or this intimates that the sin of Israel had been so notorious, that the neighbour nations could come in witnesses against them, and therefore it was fit their punishment should be so. If it could have been concealed, we would have said, *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Ashkelon*, but why should their friends consult their reputation, when they themselves do not consult it? If they are grown impudent in sin, let them bear the shame, publish it in Ashdod in Egypt.

1. Let them see *how black the charge is*, and how well proved, let them observe the behaviour of the inhabitants of Samaria, let them look off from the adjacent hills, and they may see how rude and boisterous they are, and hear how loud the cry of their sin is, as was that of Sodom. (1.) Look into their *streets*, and you will see nothing but riot and disorder, *great tumults in the midst thereof*; reason and justice are upon all occasions run down, by the noise and fury of an outrageous mob; the dominion of which is the sin and shame of any people, and is likely to be their ruin. (2.) Look into their *prisons*, and you see them filled with injured innocents, the *oppressed are in the midst thereof*, thrown down and crushed by their oppressors, overpowered and overwhelmed, and *they had no comforter*, Eccl. iv. 1. (1.) Look into their *courts of justice*, and they who preside in those courts *know not to do right*, because they have been always accustomed to do wrong: they act as if they had *no notion* at all of the thing called *justice*, are in no care to do justice themselves, or to see that others do justice. (4.) Look into their *treasures and stores*, and you see them replenished with *violence and robbery*, with that which was unjustly got, and is still unjustly kept; thus *they have heaped treasure together for the last days*, but it will prove a *treasure of wrath against the day of wrath*. It may well be said, *those know not to do right, who think to enrich themselves by doing wrong*.

2. Let them see *how heavy the doom is*, and how well executed, ver. 11, 12. (1.) Their country shall be *invaded and ruined*, and observe how the punishment answers the sin; (1.) *Great tumults are in the midst of the land*, and therefore an *adversary shall be even round about the land*; the Assyrian forces shall surround it; and break in upon it on every side. Note, When sin is harboured and indulged in the *midst* of a people, they can expect no other but that *adversaries* should be *round about* them, so that go which way they will they go into the mouth of danger, *Luke xix. 43*. (2.) They *strengthened themselves* in their wickedness, but the enemy shall *bring down their strength* from them, that strength which they abused in *oppressing the poor*, and doing *violence to all about them*. Note, That power which is made an instrument of unrighteousness will justly be *brought down*, and broken. (3.) They stored up *robbery in their palaces*, and therefore their *palaces* shall be *spoiled*; for what is got and kept wrongfully, will not be kept long. Even palaces will be no protection to fraud and oppression; but the greatest of men if they have spoiled others shall themselves be spoiled, for *the Lord is the avenger of all such*. (4.) Their countrymen shall not escape, ver. 12. They shall be in the hands of the enemy, as a lamb in the mouth of a lion, all devoured and eaten up, and they shall be utterly unable to make any resistance; and if any do make their escape, so as neither to fall by the sword, nor to go into captivity, yet they shall be very few, and those of the meanest and least considerable, like *two legs or shanks of a lamb*, or it may be a *piece of an ear*, which the lion drops, or the *shepherd* takes from him when he has eaten the whole body; so perhaps here and there one may escape from Samaria and from Damascus, when the king of Assyria shall fall upon them both; but none to make any account of: and those that do escape, it shall be with the utmost difficulty and hazard, by hiding themselves in the *corner of a bed*, or under the *bed's-foot*; which intimates that their spirits shall be quite cowed and broken, and they shall sneak shamefully in the time of danger; they shall not hide themselves in dens and caves, but in the *corner of a bed*, or the *piece of a bed*, such as poor people must be content with. They shall very narrowly escape; as it is foretold concerning the last destruction of Jerusalem, that there shall be *two in a bed together, one taken and the other left*. Note, When God's judgments come forth against a people with commission, it will be in vain to think of out-running them. Some make their *dwelling in the corner of a bed*, and in a *couch*, to speak their present security and sensuality; they are at ease, as in a *bed*, or on a *couch*, but when God comes to contend with them he shall make them *uneasy*, shall take them away out of the *bed* of their sloth and slumber; those that stretch themselves lazily upon their couches when God's judgments are abroad, shall *go captive with the first that go captive*.

2. Notice is given of it *to themselves*, ver. 12. Let this be testified, and heard in the house of *Jacob*, among all the seed of Israel, for it is spoken by the *Lord God, the God of hosts*, who hath authority to pass this sentence, and ability to execute it; let them know from him, that *the day* is at hand when God will *visit the transgressions of Israel upon him*; i. e. when he will enquire into them, and reckon for them: there will come a *day of visitation*, a day of *punishment*, and in that day, all those things they are proud of, and put confidence in, shall fail them, and

so they shall smart for the sins they have been guilty of about them.

1. Wo to *their altars*, for God will visit them. He will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of *at their altars*, and bring into the account all their superstition and idolatry, all their *expences* on their false gods, and all their *expectations* from them; and he will lay the *altars* themselves under the marks of his displeasure; for the *horns of the altar shall be cut off* and *fall to the ground*, and with them the altar itself demolished, and broken to pieces. We find the altar at Bethel prophesied against, *1 Kings xiii. 2.* and immediately *rent*, ver. 3. and that prophecy fulfilled when *Josiah burnt mens bones upon it*, *2 Kings xxiii. 15, 16*. This here seconds that prophecy, and seems to point at the same event. Note, If men will not destroy idolatrous altars, God will, and those with them that had them in veneration. Some make the *horns of the altar* to signify all those things which they *flee to* for refuge, and *trust in*, and which they make their *sanctuary*: they shall all be *cut off*, so that they shall have nothing to *take hold of*.

2. Wo to *their houses*, for God will visit them too: he will enquire into the sins they have been guilty of in their houses, the *robbery* they have stored up in their houses, and the luxury in which they lived; and, ver. 18. *I will smite the winter-house, with the summer-house*. Their nobility and gentry, and rich merchants, had their *winter-houses* in the city, and their *summer-houses* in the country, so nice were they in guarding against the inconveniencies of the winter, when the country was thought too cold, and of the summer when the city was thought too hot; tho' the climate of that good land was so temperate, like that of ours, that neither the cold nor heat were ever in extremity. They indulged a foolish affection of change and variety, but God will either by war, or by the earthquake, smite both the *winter-house*, and the *summer-house*; neither shall serve to shelter them from his judgments: the *houses of ivory* (so called because either the ceiling or wainscot, or some of the ornaments of them were edged or inlaid with ivory) those shall *perish*, shall be burnt, or pulled down, and the *great houses* shall have an end, the most splendid and spacious houses, and the houses of their great men, they shall no longer be, or at least be no longer theirs. Note, The pomp and pleasantness of mens houses will be so far from fortifying them against God's judgments, that it will make them the more grievous and vexatious; as their extravagance about them will be put upon the score of their sins and follies.

CHAP. IV.

In this chapter, (1.) The oppressors in Israel are threatened for their oppression of the poor, ver. 1—3. (2.) The idolaters in Israel being joined to idols, are given up to their own hearts lusts, ver. 4, 5. (3.) All the sins of Israel are aggravated from their incorrigibleness in them, and their refusal to return and reform, notwithstanding the various rebukes of providence they had been under, ver. 6—11. (4.) They are invited yet at length to humble themselves before God, since it is impossible for them to make their part good against him, ver. 12, 13.

1. **H**E A R this word, ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring, and let us drink. 2. The Lord GOD hath sworn by his holiness, that lo, the days shall come upon you, that he will take you away with hooks, and your posterity with fish-hooks. 3. And ye shall go out at the breaches, every cow at that which is before her, and ye shall cast them into the palace, saith the LORD. 4. ¶ Come to Beth-el and transgress, at Gilgal multiply transgression; and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years. 5. And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven, and proclaim and publish the free-offerings; for this liketh you, O ye children of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.

It is here foretold in the name of God, that oppressors shall be humbled, and idolaters shall be hardened.

1. That proud oppressors shall be humbled for their oppressions; for he that doth wrong shall receive according to the wrong that he has done. Now observe,

(1.) How their sin is described, ver. 1. They are compared to the kine of Bashan, which were a breed of cattle very large and strong, especially if, tho' bred there, they were fed upon the mountain of Samaria, where the pastures were extraordinary fat; Amos had

had been a *herdsman*, and he speaks in the dialect of his calling, comparing the rich and great men, that lived in luxury and wantonness to the *kine of Bashan*, that were wanton and unruly, would not be kept within the bounds of their own pasture, but broke through the hedges, broke down all the fences, and trespassed upon the neighbouring grounds; and not only so, but pushed and gored the lesser cattle that were not a match for them.

They that had their *summer-houses upon the mountains of Samaria*, when they went thither for fresh air, were as mischievous as the *kine upon the mountains of Bashan*, and as injurious to those about them. (1.) They oppress the poor and needy themselves, they crush them to squeeze something to themselves out of them. They take advantage of their poverty and necessity, and inability to help themselves, to make them poorer, and more necessitous than they are. They make use of their power as judges and magistrates for the invading of mens rights and properties, the poor not excepted; for they made no conscience of robbing even the *hospital*. (2.) They are in confederacy with them that do so: They say to their masters, i. e. to the masters of the poor, that abuse them, and violently take from them what they have, when they ought to have relieved them, they say to them, *bring, and let us drink*, let us feast with you upon the gains of your oppression, and then we will protect you, and stand by you in it, and reject the appeals of the poor against you. Note, What is got by extortion is commonly made use of as provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof; and therefore men are tyrants to the poor, because they are slaves to their appetites; *bring, and let us drink* is the language of those that crush the needy, as if the tears of the oppressed mingled with their wine made it drink the better. And by their associations for drinking and revelling, and an excess of riot, they strengthen their combinations for persecution and oppression, and harden the hearts of one another in it.

(2.) How their punishment is described, *ver. 2, 3*. God will take them away with hooks, and their posterity with fish-hooks, i. e. he will send the Assyrian army upon them that shall make a prey of them, shall not only inclose the body of the nation in their net, but shall angle for particular persons, and take them prisoners and captives as with hooks and fish-hooks, shall draw them out of their own land as fish are drawn out of the water, which is their element, they and their children with them; or, they in their day shall be drawn out by one victorious enemy, and their posterity in their day by another; so that by a succession of destroying judgments, they shall at length be wholly extirpated. These *kine of Bashan* thought they could no more be drawn out with a hook and a cord than the Leviathan can, *Job xli. 1, 2*. But God will make them know he has a hook for their nose, and a bridle for their jaws, *Isa. xxxvii. 29*. The enemy shall take them away as easily as the fisherman takes away the little fish, and shall make it their sport and recreation. When the enemy has made himself master of Samaria then, (1.) Some shall attempt to escape by flight, ye shall go out at the breaches made in the wall of the city, every cow at that which is before her, to shift for her own safety, and make the best of their way; and now the unruly *kine of Bashan* are tamed, and are themselves crushed, as they crushed the poor and needy. Note, Those to whom God has given a good pasture, if they are wanting in it, will justly be turned out of it; and those who will not be kept within the hedge of God's precept, forfeit the benefit of the hedge of God's protection, and will be forced in vain to flee through the breaches they have themselves fearfully made in that hedge. (2.) Others shall think to shelter themselves, or at least their best effects in the place, because it is a castle well fortified, and a garrison well manned: Ye shall throw your selves, so some read it, or throw them, i. e. your posterity, your children, or whatever is dear to you, into the palace, where the enemy will find it ready to be seized. Note, What is got by oppression cannot long be enjoyed with satisfaction.

(3.) How their sentence to this punishment is ratified, the Lord God hath sworn it by his holiness; he had often said it, and they regarded it not, they thought God and his prophets did but jest with them; therefore he swears it in his wrath, and what he hath sworn he will not revoke. He swears by his holiness, that attribute of his which is so much his glory, and which is so much glorified in the punishment of wicked people; for as sure as God is a holy God, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, shall reap the same.

2. That obstinate idolaters shall be hardened in their idolatries, *ver. 4, 5*. Come to Bethel and transgress: It is spoken ironically, do so, take your course, multiply your transgressions, by multiplying your sacrifices, for this liketh you, but what will ye do in the end hereof? Here we see, (1.) How intent they were upon the service of their idols, and how willing they were to be at cost upon them; they brought their sacrifices, and their tithes, and their free-offerings, hoping that therein they should be accepted of God, but it was all an abomination to him. The profuseness of idolaters in the service of their false-gods may shame our strait-handness in the service of the true and living God. (2.) How they mimicked God's institutions: They had their daily sacrifice at the altar of Bethel, as God had at his altar; they had their thank-offerings as God had, only they allowed leaven in them which God had forbidden, because their priests did not like to have the bread so heavy and tasteless as it would be if it had not leaven in it, or something to ferment it. Holy bread would not serve them, unless it were

pleasant bread. (3.) How well pleased they were with these services themselves, *this liketh you, O ye children of Israel. So ye love*. What was their own invention they were fond of, and wedded to, and thought it must therefore be pleasing to God, because it was agreeable to their own fancy. (4.) How they are upbraided with it. Come to Bethel, to Gilgal, bring the sacrifices and tithes yourselves, proclaim and publish to the nation the free-offerings, pressing them to bring in abundance of such, go on in this way, that is, (1.) It is plain you are resolved to do it whatever God and conscience say to the contrary. (2.) Your prophets shall let you alone in it, and not admonish you as they have done, for it is to no purpose; let no man strive or rebuke his neighbour. (3.) Your foolish hearts shall be more and more darkened and befotted, and you shall be quite given up to these strong delusions, to believe a lie. (4.) What will you get by it? Come to Bethel, and multiply your sacrifices, and see what the better you will be, what returns you will have to your sacrifices, what stead they will stand you in, in the day of distress; you shall be ashamed of Bethel your confidence, *Jer. xlviii. 13*. (5.) Come and transgress, come and multiply your transgression, that you may fill up the measure of your iniquity, and be ripened for ruin. Thus Christ said to Judas, *What thou doest do quickly*; and to the Jews, *fill ye up the measure of your fathers*, *Mat. xxiii. 32*.

6. ¶ And I also have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, and want of bread in all your places: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 7. And also I have withholden the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest, and I caused it to rain upon one city, and caused it not to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not, withered. 8. So two or three cities wandered unto one city to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 9. I have smitten you with blasting and mildew; when your gardens, and your vineyards, and your fig-trees, and your olive-trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 10. I have sent among you the pestilence after the manner of Egypt: your young men have I slain with the sword, and have taken away your horses, and I have made the stink of your camps to come up unto your nostrils: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 11. I have overthrown some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand pluckt out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the LORD. 12. Therefore thus will I do unto thee O Israel: and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. 13. For lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the LORD, the God of hosts is his name.

Here, 1. God complains of his peoples incorrigibleness under the judgments which he had brought upon them, in order to their humiliation and reformation. He had by several tokens intimated to them his displeasure, with this design, That they might by repentance make their peace with him, but it had not that effect: It is five times repeated in these verses, as the burthen of the charge, yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord, you have been several times corrected, but in vain; you are not reclaimed, there is no sign of amendment. You have been sent for by one messenger after another, but you have not come back, you have not come home. (1.) This intimates, that that which God designed in all his providential rebukes was to reduce them to their allegiance; to influence them to return to him. (2.) That if they had returned to their God they should have been accepted, he would have bid them welcome, and the troubles they were in should have been removed. (3.) That the reason why God sent further troubles was, because former troubles had not done the work, otherwise it is no pleasure to the Almighty that he should afflict. (4.) That God was grieved at their obstinacy, and took it unkindly, that they should force him to do that which he did so unwillingly, you have not returned, to me from whom you have revolted, to me with whom you are in covenant, to me that stand ready to receive you, to me who have so often called you.

Now to aggravate their incorrigibleness, and to justify himself in inflicting greater judgments, he recounts the lesser judgments with which he had tried to bring them to repentance.

1. There had sometimes been a scarcity of provisions, tho' there was no visible cause of it, *ver. 6*. I have given you cleanness of teeth in all your cities, for you had no meat to chew, whereby your teeth might be fouled; especially no flesh which dirties the teeth;

or emptiness of teeth, nothing to fill your mouths with. Bread, the staff of life, has been wanting, for you have sown much and brought in little, as Hag. i. 9. Some think this refers to that seven years famine that was in Elifha's time, which we read of 2 Kings viii. 1. Now when God thus took away their corn in the season thereof, because they had prepared it for Baal, they should have said, we will go and return to our first husband, having paid dear for leaving him, but it had not that effect, they have not returned to me, saith the Lord.

2. Sometimes they had wanted rain, and then of course they wanted the fruits of the earth; this evil was of the Lord, I have withholden the rain from you; God has the key of the clouds, and if he shut up, who can open? ver. 7. The rain was withheld when there were yet three months to the harvest, at the time when they used to have it, and therefore the withholding of it was an extraordinary thing, and if the course of nature was altered, they must therein own the hand of the God of nature; and it was at a time when they most needed it, and therefore the want of it was a very sore judgment, and blasted their expectations of a crop at harvest.

And one circumstance which made this very remarkable was, that when there were some places that wanted rain, and withered for want of it, there were other places near adjoining that had it in abundance. God caused it to rain upon one city, and not upon another, in the same country; nay, he caused it to rain upon one field, one piece of a field, and it was thereby made fruitful and flourishing, but on the next field, on the other side the hedge, nay, on another part of the same field it rained not at all, and it was so long without rain that all the products of it withered.

No doubt this was literally true, and there were many instances of it which were generally taken notice of. Now (1.) By this it appeared, that the withholding of the rain was not casual, but by a divine direction and disposal; that the cloud which watereth the earth is turned round about by the counsels of God, to do whatsoever he commandeth it, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy, Job xxxvii. 12, 13. Rain doth not go by planets, (as common people speak) but as God sends it by his winds. (2.) We have reason to think that those cities, on which it rained not, were the most infamous for wickedness, such as Bethel and Gilgal, ver. 4. and that those, on which it rained, were such as retained something of religion and virtue among them: And so in the town-fields it rained or rained not upon the piece, according as the owner was; for we are sure the curse of the Lord is in the house, and upon the ground of the wicked, but he blesteth the habitation of the just, and his field is a field that the Lord hath blessed. (3.) It would be the greater grief and vexation to those whose fields withered for want of rain, to see their neighbours fields well watered and flourishing. My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry, Isa. lxxv. 13. the wicked shall see it and be grieved. Probably those that were oppressed, were rained upon, and so they recovered their losses, while the oppressors withered, and so lost their gains. (4.) Yet as to the nation in general, it was a mixture of mercy with the judgment, and consequently strengthened the call to repentance and reformation, and encouraged them to hope for all mercy in their returns to God since there was so much mercy, even in God's rebukes of them. But because they did not make a good use of this gracious allay to the extremity of the judgment, they had not the benefit of it which otherwise they might have had, for ver. 8. Two or three cities wandered at uncertainty, as beggars unto one city to drink water, and, if possible, to have some to carry home with them, but they were not satisfied; it was but here and there one city that had water, while many wanted, and then it was not as usual, usus communis aquarum; they that had it had occasion for it, or knew not how soon they might, and therefore could afford but little to them that wanted, saying, left there be not enough for us and you. They that came drank water but they were not satisfied, because they drank it by measure, and with astonishment, and they that drink of this water shall thirst again, John iv. 13. They were not satisfied because their desires were greedy, and what they had God did not bless to them, Hag. i. 6.

And now one would think when they met with all this disappointment, they should have considered their ways and repented; but it had not that effect, yet have ye not returned to me, no not so much as to pray in a right manner for the former and latter rain, Zech. x. 1. See the folly of carnal hearts, they will wander from city to city, from one creature to another, in pursuit of satisfaction, and still they miss of it; they labour for that which satisfieth not, Isa. lv. 2. and yet after all they will not return to God, will not incline their ear to him in whom they might have satisfaction. The preaching of the gospel is as rain, God sometimes blesteth one place with it more than another, some countries, some cities, are like Gideon's fleece wet with this dew, while the ground about is dry; all withers where this rain is wanting; but it were well if people were but as wise for their souls as they are for their bodies, and when they have not this rain near them, would go and seek it where it is to be had, and if they seek aright they shall not seek in vain.

3. Sometimes the fruits of their ground were eaten up by caterpillars, or blasted with mildew, ver. 9. heaven and earth are armed against those who have made God their enemy; when God pleased, that is, when he was displeased, (1.) They suffered by a malignant air; the influences of which either too hot or too cold blasted their

fruits, with a force that could be neither discerned nor resisted, and against which there was no defence. (2.) They suffered by malignant animals. Their vineyards and gardens yielded their increase in great abundance, so did their fig-trees, and olive-trees, but the palmer-worm devoured them before the fruits were ripe and fit to be gathered in; this was either the same judgment with that which we read of, Joel i. 4, 6. or a lesser judgment of the same nature sent before, to give warning of that. But they did not take warning; yet have ye not returned unto me.

4. Sometimes the plague had raged among them, and the sword of war had cut off multitudes, ver. 10. The pestilence is God, messenger, this he sent among them, with directions whom to strike dead, and it was done; it was a pestilence after the manner of Egypt: deaths were scattered among them by the hand of a destroying angel at midnight. And perhaps this pestilence, as that of Egypt, fastened upon the first-born. In the way of Egypt, so the margin; when they were making their escape to Egypt, or going thither to seek for aid, the pestilence seized them by the way, and stopped their journey. The sword of war is likewise the sword of the Lord, this was drawn among them with commission; and then it slew their young men, the strength of the present generation, and the seed of the next; God saith, I have slain them, he avows the execution; The slain of the Lord are many. The enemy took away their horses, and converted them to their own use: and the dead carcases of those that were slain either with sword or pestilence, were so many, and for want of surviving friends were left so long unburied, that the stench of their camps came up into their nostrils, and was both noisome and dangerous, and might put them in mind of the offensiveness of their sin to God. And yet this did not prevail to humble and reclaim them; you have not returned to him that smiteth you. Such a rueful, woful, sight as this prevailed not to make them religious.

5. In these and other judgments some were remarkably cut off, and made monuments of justice, others were remarkably spared and made monuments of mercy, the setting of which the one over against the other, one would have thought likely to work upon them, but it had not its effect, ver. 11. (1.) Some were quite ruined, their families destroyed and themselves in them, I have overthrown some of you as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, perhaps consumed them with lightning, as Sodom was, or the houses some other way burnt to the ground, and the inhabitants in them. Sodom and Gomorrah are said to be condemned with an overthrow, and so made an example, 2 Pet. ii. 6. God had threatened to destroy the whole land with such an overthrow as that of Sodom, Deut. xxix. 23. But he began with some particular places first to give them warning, or perhaps with some particular persons, whose sins went before-hand to judgment. (2.) Others very narrowly escaped, ye were many of you as a fire-brand plucked out of the burning, like Lot out of Sodom, when the fire had already kindled upon you, and yet you hate sin never the more for the danger it has brought you to, nor love God ever the more for the deliverance he wrought for you; you that have been so signally delivered, and in such a distinguishing way, yet have not returned unto me.

2. God in the close calls upon his people, yet at length in this their day to understand the things that belong to their peace, before they were hid from their eyes, ver. 12, 13. Observe here,

1. How God threatens them with sorer judgments than any they had yet been under. Therefore, seeing you have not been wrought upon by correction hitherto, Thus will I do unto thee, O Israel. He doth not say how he will do, but it shall be something worse than had come yet, John v. 14. Or, thus I will, go on to do unto thee, following one judgment with another, like the plagues of Egypt, till I have made a full end. Nothing else but reformation will prevent the ruin of a sinful people. If they turn not to him, his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still. I will punish you yet seven times more, if you will not be reformed, so it was written in the law, Lev. xvi. 23.

2. How he awakens them therefore to think of making their peace with God. Seeing I will do this unto thee; and there is no remedy, Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel: That is (1.) Consider how unable thou art to meet him as a combatant; some make it to be spoken by way of irony or challenge: prepare to meet God that is coming forth to contend with thee; what armour of proof canst thou put on? What courage canst thou steel thyself with? Alas, it is but putting briers and thorns before a consuming fire, Isa. xxvii. 4, 5. Art thou able with less than ten thousand, to meet him that comes forth against thee with more than twenty thousand? Luke xiv. 31. (2.) Resolve therefore to meet him as a penitent, as a humble suppliant; to meet him as thy God, in covenant with thee, to submit, and stand it out no longer. We must prepare to meet God in the way of his judgments, Isa. xxvi. 8. to take hold on his strength that we may make peace. Note, Since we cannot flee from God we are concerned to prepare to meet him, and therefore he gives us warning that we may prepare. When we are to meet him in his ordinances, we must prepare to meet him, prepare to seek him.

3. How he sets forth the greatness and power of God as a reason why we should prepare to meet him, ver. 13. If he be such

such a God as he is here described to be, it is folly to contend with him; and our duty and interest to make our peace with him; it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. (1.) He *formeth the mountains*, made the earth, the strongest stateliest parts of it, and by the word of his power still upholdeth it and them. Whatever are the products of the everlasting mountains he formed them, whatever *salvation is hoped for from hills and mountains*, he is the founder of it, *Psal. lxxxix. 11, 12.* He that formed the *great mountains can make them plain*, when they stand in the way of his peoples salvation. (2.) He *createth the wind*, the power of the air is derived from him, and directed by him; he bringeth the wind out of his treasures; and orders from what point of the compass it shall blow; and he that made it rules it, even *the winds and the seas obey him.* (3.) He *declares unto man what is his thought*, he makes known his counsel by his servants the prophets, to the children of men, the thought of his justice against impenitent sinners, and the thought of good he thinks towards those that repent. He can also *make known*, for he perfectly *knows* the thought that is in man's heart, he *understands it afar off*, and in the day of conviction will set the evil thoughts among other the sins of sinners in order before them. (4.) He often *makes the morning darkness*, by thick clouds overspreading the sky presently after the sun rose bright and glorious; so when we look for prosperity and joy, he can dash our expectations with some unlooked for calamity. (5.) He *treads upon the high places of the earth*, is not only higher than the highest, but has dominion over all; tramples upon proud men, and upon the idols that were worshipped in the highest places. (6.) *Jehovah, the God of hosts is his name*, for he has his being of himself, and is the fountain of all being, and all the hosts of heaven and earth are at his command. Let us humble our selves before this God, prepare to meet him, and give all diligence to make him *our God*, for happy the people whose God he is, that have all this power engaged for them.

C H A P. V.

The scope of this chapter is to prosecute the exhortation given to Israel, in the close of the foregoing chapter to prepare to meet his God; he here tells them, (1.) *What preparation they must make, they must seek the Lord, and not seek any more to idols*, ver. 4—8. *they must seek good and love it*, ver. 14, 15. (2.) *Why they must make this preparation to meet their God.* (1.) *Because of the present deplorable condition they were in*, ver. 1—3. (2.) *Because it was by sin that they were brought into such a condition*, ver. 7, 10, 11, 12. (3.) *Because it would be their happiness to seek God, and he was ready to be found of them*, ver. 8, 9, 14. (4.) *Because he would proceed in his wrath to their utter ruin if they did not seek him*, ver. 5, 6, 13, 16, 17. (5.) *Because all their confidences would fail them, if they did not seek unto God, and make him their friend.* (1.) *Their profane contempt of God's judgments, and setting them at defiance would not secure them*, ver. 8—20. (2.) *Their external services in religion, and the shews of devotion, would not avail to turn away the wrath of God*, ver. 21—24. (3.) *Their having been long in possession of church-privileges, and in a course of holy duties, would not be their protection, while all along they had kept up their idolatrous customs*, ver. 25—27. *They have therefore no way left them to save themselves, but by repentance and reformation.*

1. **H**E A R ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel. 2. The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land, *there is none to raise her up.* 3. For thus saith the Lord GOD, The city that went out by a thousand, shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred, shall leave ten to the house of Israel.

This chapter begins as those two next foregoing began, with *hear this word*. Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; it is our duty, it is our interest, yet so stupid are the most of men that they need to be again and again called upon to *hear the word of the Lord*; to give audience, to give attention; *hear this word*. This convincing awakening word must be heard and heeded, as well as words of comfort and peace; the word that is taken up *against us*, as well as that which makes for us; for whether we hear or forbear, the word of God shall take effect, and not a tittle of it shall fall to the ground. It is the word *which I take up*, not the prophet only, but the God that sent him. It is *the word that the Lord hath spoken*, chap. iii. 1.

No. lxxiv.

The word to be heard is a *lamentation*, a lamentable account of the present calamitous state of the kingdom of Israel, and a lamentable prediction of its utter destruction. Their condition is sad, *The virgin of Israel is fallen*, ver. 2. *is come down* from what she was; that state tho' not pure and chaste as a virgin, yet was *beautiful and gay*, and had her charms, *looked high herself*, and was *courted* by many, as a virgin; but *she is fallen* into contempt and poverty, and is universally slighted; nay, and their condition is helpless; *she shall no more rise*, shall never recover her former dignity again. God had lately begun to *cut Israel short*, 2 Kings x. 32. and because they repented not it not, was long before he *cut Israel down*.

1. Their *princes* that should have helped them up were *disabled*; she is *forsaken upon her land*. Not only those she was in alliance with abroad failed her, but her friends at home *deserted* her; she had not been carried captive into a strange land, if she had not first been *forsaken upon her own land*, and *thrown to the ground* there, and all her true interests *abandoned* by those that should have had them at heart. *There is none to raise her up*, none that can do it, none that cares to *lend her a hand*.

2. Their *people* that should have helped them up were *diminished*, ver. 3. The city that had a militia, a thousand strong; and in the beginning of the war had furnished out a thousand effective men, able-bodied and well armed, when they come to review their troops after the battle, shall find but a *hundred left*; and in proportion, the city that sent out a *hundred* shall have but *ten* come back; so great a slaughter shall be made, and *so few left to the house of Israel* for the publick service and safety.

Scarce one in ten shall escape of the hands that should relieve this abject, this dejected, nation. Note, the lessening of the numbers of God's spiritual Israel, by death or desertion, is just matter for *lamentation*, for by whom shall Jacob arise, by whom shall the decays of piety be repaired, when he is thus *made small*?

4. ¶ For thus saith the LORD unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live. 5. But seek not Beth-el, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beer-sheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Beth-el shall come to nought. 6. Seek the LORD, and ye shall live, lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph and devour it, and *there be none to quench it* in Beth-el. 7. Ye who turn judgment to wormwood, and leave off righteousness in the earth. 8. Seek him that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth, the LORD is his name: 9. That strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong; so that the spoiled shall come against the fortrefs. 10. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly. 11. Forasmuch therefore as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewen stone, but ye shall not dwell in them: ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. 12. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate *from their right*. 13. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time. 14. Seek good and not evil, that ye may live: and so the LORD the God of hosts shall be with you, as ye have spoken. 15. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph.

This is a message from God to the house of Israel, in which,

1. They are *told of their faults*, that they might see what occasion there was for them to *repent and reform*, and that when they were called to return, they might not need to ask *wherein shall we return*? God tells them in general, ver. 12. *I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins*; and you shall be made to know them too.

In our penitent reflexions upon our sins, we must consider, as God doth in his judicial remarks upon them, and will do in the great day, (1.) That they are *very numerous*; they are our *manifold transgressions*; sins of various kinds, and often repeated. O what a multitude of vain and vile thoughts lodge within us! What a multitude of idle, foolish, wicked words have been spoken by us! In what a multitude of instances have we gratified and indulged our corrupt appetites and passions! And how many are our omissions of duty, and in duty! Who can understand his errors?

errors? Who can tell how oft he offends? God knows how many, just how many, our transgressions are, none of them pass him *unobserved*; we know they are to us innumerable, *more than the hairs of our head*; and we have reason to see what danger we have brought our selves into, and what abundance of work we have made for repentance by our *manifest transgressions*, by the numberless number of our sins of daily incurfion. (2.) That some of them are *very heinous*, they are our *mighty* sins; sins that are *more exceeding sinful* in their own nature, and by being committed presumptuously, and with a high hand. Sins against the light of nature, flagrant crimes that are *mighty* to over-power your convictions, and to pull down judgments upon you.

He instances in some of these *mighty sins*. (1.) They *corrupted the worship of God*, and turned to idols; that is implied, *ver. 5.* that they had *sought to Bethel*, where one of the golden calves was; they had frequented Gilgal, a place which they chose to set up idols in, because it had been made famous in the days of Joshua by God's wonderful appearances to and for his people. Beer-sheba likewise, a place that had been famous in the days of the patriarchs, was now another rendezvous of idols; as we find also, *chap. viii. 14.* And thither they passed, tho' it lay at a distance in the land of Judah. Now having thus shamefully gone a whoring from God, no doubt they were concerned to return to him. (2.) They *perverted justice* among themselves, *ver. 7.* ye turn judgment to wormwood, i. e. ye make your administrations of justice bitter and nauseous, and highly displeasing both to God and man.

That fruit is become a *weed*, a weed in the garden; as nothing more *venerable*, nothing more *valuable* than justice duly administered, so nothing is more hurtful, nothing more abominable than designedly *doing wrong*, under colour and pretence of *doing right*. *Corruptio optimi est pessima. Ye leave off righteousness in the earth*; as if those that do wrong were accountable to the God of heaven only, and not to the princes and judges of the earth: thus it was as before the flood, when the earth was filled with violence. (3.) They were very *oppressive to the poor*, and made them poorer; they *tread upon the poor*, *ver. 11.* trampled upon them, hectoring over them, made them their foot-stool, and were most imperious and barbarous to those that were most obsequious and submissive; they cared not what shame and slavery they put them to, who were *poor*, and such as they could get nothing by. That was it that the judges aimed at, nothing but to enrich themselves, and therefore they *took from the poor burthens of wheat*; took it by extortion, either by way of bribe or usury: the poor had no other way to save themselves from being trodden upon, and trodden to dirt by them, but by presenting to them horse-loads of that corn, which they and their families should have had to subsist upon; and they forced them to do it. They took from the poor *debts of wheat*, so some read it. It was legally due either for rent, or for corn lent, but they exacted it with rigour from those who were disabled by the providence of God to pay it, as *Neb. v. 2, 5.* In demanding and recovering even of a just debt, we must take heed lest we act either unjustly or uncharitably. This sin of oppression they are again charged with, *ver. 12.* They afflict the just, by turning the edge of the law, and of the sword of justice, against those that are the innocent and *quiet in the land*; they therefore hated men because they were more righteous than themselves, and he that departed from evil thereby made himself a prey to them. They take a bribe from the rich to patronize and protect them in oppressing the poor; so that he who has money in his hand is sure to have the judge and judgment on his side, be his cause never so bad. Thus they turn aside the poor in the gate, in the courts of justice, from their right. If the poor sue for their right, who cannot bribe them, or are so *honest* that they will not, tho' they have it never so clear in view, and never so near, yet they are turned away from it by their unrighteous sentence, and cannot come at it. And therefore the prudent will keep silence, *ver. 13.* Men will reckon it their *prudence*, when they are wronged and injured, to be *silent*, and make no complaints to the magistrates, for it will be to no purpose, they shall not have justice done them. (4.) They were malicious persecutors of God's faithful ministers and people, *ver. 10.* Their hearts were so fully set in them to do evil, that they could not bear to be reprov'd, (1.) By the *ministry of the word*; by the reading and expounding of the law, and the messages which the prophets delivered to them in the name of the Lord. They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, in the gate of the Lord's house, or in their courts of justice, or in the places of concourse, where wisdom has lifted up her voice, *Prov. i. 21.* Reprovers in the gate are reprovers by office, these they hated, counting them their enemies, because they told them the truth, as Ahab hated Micajah. They not only despised them, but had an enmity to them, and sought to do them mischief. Those that hate reproof love ruin. (2.) By the conversation of their *honest neighbours*. Tho' things were generally very bad, yet there were some among them that spoke uprightly, that made conscience of what they said, and as it was their praise, so it was the shame of those that spoke deceitfully, and condemned them, as Noah's faith condemned the unbelief of the old world, and for that reason they abhorred them; they were such inveterate

enemies to the thing called *honesty*, that they could not endure the sight of an honest man.

All that have any sense of the common interest of mankind will love and value such as *speak uprightly*, for veracity is the bond of human society; to what a pitch of folly and madness then were they arrived, who having banished all notions of justice out of their own hearts, would have them banished out of the world too, and so put mankind into a state of war, for they abhor him that speaketh uprightly? And for this reason the prudent shall keep silence in that time, *ver. 13.* Prophets cannot, dare not, keep silence, the impulse they are under will not allow them to act by prudential considerations, they must cry aloud and not spare; but as for other wise and good men, they shall keep silence, and shall reckon it is their *prudence* to do so, because it is an *evil time*. (1.) They shall think it dangerous to complain, and therefore shall keep silence; this was one way in which they afflicted the just, that by false suggestions, and strained innuendoes, they made men offenders for a word, *Isa. xxix. 21.* and therefore the prudent who were wise as serpents, because they knew not how what they said might be misinterpreted, and misrepresented, were so cautious as to say nothing, lest they should run themselves into a *premunire*, because it was an *evil time*. Note, Through the iniquity of the times as good men are *hid*, so good men are *silent*, and it is their wisdom to be so; little said soon amended. But it is their comfort that they may speak freely to God, when they know not who else they can speak freely to. (2.) They shall think it fruitless to reprove. They see what wickedness is committed, and their spirits are stirred up as Paul's at Athens; but they shall think it prudent not to bear an open testimony against it, because it is to no purpose. They are joined to their idols, let them alone. Let no man strive or rebuke another; for it is but casting pearls before swine. The cautious men will say to a bold reprover, as Erasmus to Luther, *Abi in cellam, & dic, misere mei, Domine.* Let grave lessons and counsels be kept for better men, and better times. And there is a time to keep silence, as well as a time to speak, *Eccl. iii. 7.* Evil times will not bear plain dealing, that is, evil men will not. And the men the prophet here speaks of, had reason to think themselves evil men indeed, when wise and good men thought it in vain to speak to them, and were afraid of having any thing to do with them.

2. They are told of their danger, and what judgments they lay exposed to for their sins. (1.) The places of their idolatry are in danger to be ruined in the first place, *ver. 5.* Gilgal, the head quarters of idolatry, shall go into captivity, not only its inhabitants but its images, and Bethel, with its golden calf, shall come to nought. The victorious enemy shall make nothing of it, so easily shall it be spoiled, and shall bring it to nothing, so effectually shall it be spoiled. Idols were always vanity and things of nought, and so they shall prove when God appears to abolish them. (2.) The body of the kingdom is in danger of being ruined with them, *ver. 6.* There is danger, lest if you seek him not in time he break out like a fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it; for our God is a righteous judge, is a consuming fire, and the men of Israel, as criminals, are stubble before him; wo to those that make themselves fuel to the fire of God's wrath; it follows, and there shall be none to quench it in Bethel; there their idols were, and their idolatrous priests, thither they brought their sacrifices, and there they offered up their prayers; but God tells them, that when the fire of his judgments kindles upon them, all the gods they served at Bethel should not be able to quench it; should not turn away the judgment, or be any relief to them under it. Thus they that make an idol of the world will find it insufficient to protect them, when God comes to reckon with them for their spiritual idolatry. (3.) What they have got by oppression and extortion shall be taken from them, *ver. 11.* Ye have built houses of heaven stone, which you thought would be lasting, but you shall not dwell in them, for your enemies shall burn them down, or possess them for themselves, or take you into captivity; Ye have planted pleasant vineyards, have contrived how to make them every way agreeable, and have promised yourselves many a pleasant walk in them, but ye shall be forced to walk off, and shall never drink wine of them.

The law had tenderly provided, That if a man had built a house or planted a vineyard, he should be at his liberty to return from the wars, *Deut. xx. 5, 6.* But now the necessity would be so urgent that it would not be allowed, all must go to the battle, and many of those who had lately been building and planting should fall in battle, and never enjoy what they had been labouring for. What is not honestly got is not likely to be long enjoyed.

3. They are told their duty, and have great encouragement to set about it in good earnest, and good reasons. The duties here prescribed to them are *godliness* and *honesty*: seriousness in their applications to God, and justice in their dealings with men; and each of these are here pressed upon them with proper arguments, to enforce the exhortation.

1. They are here exhorted to be sincere and devout in their addresses to God, *ver. 4.* God faith to the house of Israel, seek ye me. And good reason, for should not a people seek unto their God? *Isa. viii. 19.* whither else should they go but to their Protector? Israel was a prince with God, let his descendents seek the Lord, as he did, and they shall be so too. Now in order to their doing this they must abandon their idolatries; God is not sought truly, if he be not sought only, for he will endure no rivals: Seek ye the Lord,

Lord, and seek not Bethel, ver. 5. consult not your idol-oracles, nor ask at the mouth of the priests of Bethel; seek not to the golden calf there for protection, nor bring your prayers and sacrifices any longer thither, or to Gilgal, for you *forsake your own mercies*, if you observe those *lying vanities*. But *seek the Lord*, ver. 6, 17. enquire after him, enquire of him; seek to know his mind as your rule, to secure his favour as your felicity: to press this exhortation we are bid to consider, (1.) What we shall get by seeking God; it will be *our life*, we shall find him, and shall be happy in him. So he tells them himself, ver. 4. *Seek ye me, and ye shall live*. So the prophet tells them, ver. 6. *Seek the Lord, and ye shall live*. They that seek *perishing* gods shall *perish* with them, ver. 5. but they that seek the *living* God shall *live* with him: ye shall be delivered from the killing judgments which you are threatened with; your nation shall *live*, shall recover from its present languishings; your *souls shall live*, you shall be sanctified and comforted, and made for ever blessed, *Ye shall live*. (2.) What a God is he whom we are to seek, ver. 8, 9. (1.) He is a God of *almighty power himself*. The idols were impotent things, could do neither good nor evil, and therefore it was folly either to *fear* or *trust* them; but the God of Israel *doth* every thing, and *can do* any thing, and therefore we ought to seek to him; he challengeth our homage who has all power in his hand, and it is our interest to have him on our side.

Divers proofs and instances are here given of God's power as Creator in the kingdom of nature, both the founding and governing of that kingdom. Compare chap. iv. 13. (1.) The stars are the work of his hands; those stars which the heathens worshipped, ver. 26. the *stars of your god*, those stars are God's creatures and servants. He *maketh the seven stars and Orion*, two very remarkable constellations, which Amos, a herdsman, while he kept his cattle by night, had particularly observed the motions of. He made them at the first, he still *maketh* them to be what they are to this earth; and either *binds* or *looseth* the *sweet influences* of Pleiades and Orion, the two constellations here mentioned, *Job xxxviii. 31.* — ix. 9. to which passages Amos seems here to refer, putting them in mind of those antient discoveries of the glory of God before he was called the God of Israel. (2.) The constant succession of day and night is under his direction, and is kept up by his power and providence. It is he that *turns* the night, which is dark as *the shadow of death*, into the morning by the rising of the sun, and by the setting of the sun *makes the day dark with night*: and the same power can, for humble penitents, easily turn affliction and sorrow into prosperity and joy, but can as easily turn the prosperity of presumptuous sinners into darkness, into utter darkness. (3.) The rain riseth and falls as he appoints. He *calls for the waters of the sea*, out of them vapours are drawn up by the heat of the sun, which gather into clouds, and are *poured out upon the face of the earth*, to water it, and make it fruitful. This was the mercy that had been *withholden from them* of late, chap. iv. 7. and therefore to whom should they apply themselves, but to him who had power to give it? for all the *vanities of the heathen* could not give rain, nor could the *heavens* of themselves give showers, *Jer. xiv. 22.* it is God that has *made these things*, *Jehovah is his name*, the name by which the God of nature, the God of the whole earth, has made himself known to his people Israel, and covenanted with them. (2.) As he is a God of almighty power himself, so he *giveth strength and power unto his people*, that seek him, and *renews strength* to those that had lost it, if they *wait upon him* for it; for, ver. 9. he *strengthens the spoiled against the strong*, to such a degree, that the spoiled came *against the fortrefs*, and make bold and brave attacks upon those that had spoiled them. This is an encouragement to the people to *seek the Lord*, that if they do so they shall find him able to retrieve their affairs, when they are brought to the lowest ebb: tho' they are *the spoiled*, and their enemies are *the strong*, if they can but engage God for them, they shall soon recruit so as the next time to be not only the aggressors, but the conquerors; they *come against the fortrefs* to make reprisals, and become masters of it.

2. They are here exhorted to be honest and just in their dealings with men, ver. 14, 15. where observe,

1. The duty required. *Seek good and not evil. Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate*, re-establish it there, whence it has been banished, ver. 7. Note, Things are not so bad, but that they may be amended, if the right course be taken; we must not despair but that grievances may be redressed, and abuses rectified; justice may yet *triumph* there where injustice *tyrannizeth*. In order to this, good must be *loved* and *sought*, evil must be *hated* and no longer sought. We must love good principles, and adhere to them, love to do good, and abound in it; love good people, and good converse, and good duties; and whatever good we do we must do it from a principle of *love*; do it of choice and with delight. And they who thus *love good* will *seek it*, will contrive to do all the good they can, and enquire for opportunities to do it; and endeavour it to the utmost of their power. They will also *hate evil*, will abhor the thought of doing an unjust thing; and abstain from all appearance of it.

In vain do we pretend to *seek God* in our devotions, if we do not *seek good* in our whole conversations.

2. The reasons annexed. (1.) This is the *sure way* to be happy *ourselves*, and to have the continual presence of God with us.

Seek good and not evil, that ye may live, may escape the punishment of the evil you have sought and loved; *righteousness delivereth from death*, that ye may have the favour of God, which is your life, which is better than life itself; that ye may have comfort in yourselves, and may live to some good purpose. You shall live, for *so the Lord God of hosts shall be with you*, and be your life: Note, Those that keep in the way of duty have the presence of God with them, as the *God of hosts*, a God of almighty power. He will be with you *as ye have spoken*, i. e. as ye have *gloried*; you shall have that really, which while you went on in unrighteous ways, you only *seemed to have*, and *boasted* of as if you had. They that truly repent and reform enter into the enjoyment of that comfort, which before they had only flattered themselves with the imagination of. Or, as ye have *prayed*, when you *sought the Lord*: Live up to your prayers, and you shall have what you pray for. (2.) This is the *likeliest* way to make the nation happy. If you seek and love that which is good, you may contribute to the saving of the land from ruin. *It may be the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph*; tho' there is but a *remnant* left, if God be gracious to that remnant, it will rise to a great nation again: and if some among them turn from sin, especially if *judgment be established in the gate*, tho' we cannot be certain, yet there is great probability that publick affairs will take a new and happy turn, and every thing will *mend* if men mend their lives. Temporal promises are made with an *it may be*, and our prayers must be made accordingly.

16. Therefore the LORD the God of hosts, the Lord saith thus, *Wailing shall be in all streets*, and they shall say in all the high-ways, *Alas, alas*: and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation, to wailing. 17. And in all vineyards *shall be wailing*: for I will pass through thee, saith the LORD. 18. Wo unto you that desire the day of the LORD: to what end *is it* for you? the day of the LORD *is* darkness, and not light. 19. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. 20. *Shall not the day of the LORD be* darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?

Here is, 1. A very terrible threatening of destruction approaching, ver. 16, 17. Because they would not take the right course to obtain the favour of God, God would take an effectual course to make them feel the weight of his displeasure. The threatening is introduced with more than ordinary solemnity to strike an awe upon them; it is not the word of the prophet only, if so, it might be made light of, but it is the *Lord Jehovah*, that has an infinite eternal being, it is the *God of hosts* that has a boundless irresistible power, and it is *Adonai*, the Lord, that has an absolute incontestable sovereignty, and an universal dominion, it is he that saith it, who can and will make his words good; and he hath said, (1.) That the land of Israel shall be *put in mourning*, true mourning; that all places shall be filled with lamentation, for the calamities coming upon them. Look into the cities, and *wailing shall be in all streets*, in the great streets, in the by-streets. Look into the country, and *they shall say in all the high-ways*, *Alas, alas*, we are all undone: the lamentation shall be so great as not to be confined within doors, nor kept within the bounds of decency, but it shall be proclaimed in the *streets* and *high-ways*, and run wild. The husbandman shall be called from the plough by the calamities of his country, to the natural expressions of mourning: and because those will come short of the merits of the cause, such as are *skilful of lamentation* shall be called to *artificial* mourning, to put accents upon the lamentations of the real mourners with their *abone, abone*. Even in all vineyards, where there used to be nothing but mirth and pleasure, there shall be general *wailing*, when a foreign force invades the country, lays all waste, and there is no making any head against it, no weapons left but prayers and tears. (2.) That the land of Israel shall be *brought to ruin*, and the advances of that ruin are the occasion of all this wailing. *I will pass through thee*, as the destroying angel passed through the land of Egypt to destroy the first-born, but then *passed over* the houses of the Israelites. God's judgments had often passed by them, but now they shall pass through them, shall run them through.

2. A just and severe reproof to those who made light of these threatenings, and impudently *bid defiance* to the justice of God and his judgments, ver. 18. Wo unto you that *desire the day of the Lord*; that really wish for times of war and confusion; as some do who have restless spirits, and long for changes; or who chuse to *fish in troubled waters*, hoping to raise their families, as some had done, upon the ruins of their country: but the prophet tells them, this should be so great a desolation that no body could get by it. Or it is spoken to those, who in their *wailings* and *lamentations* for the calamities they were in, wished they might die, and be rid out of their *misery*; as Job did with passion. The prophet shews them the folly of this: Do they know what death

is to those that are unprepared for it, and how much more terrible it will be than any thing that can befall them in this life? Or rather, it is spoken to those who speak *jestingly* of that day of the Lord which the prophets spoke so *seriously* of; they desired it, i. e. they challenged it; they said, Let him do his worst, let him make speed, and hasten his work, Isa. v. 19. *Where is the promise of his coming?* 2 Pet. iii. 4. It intimates (1.) That they do not believe it. They say they wish it would come, because they do not believe it will ever come; nor will they believe it unless they see it. (2.) That they do not fear it; tho' they may have some belief of it, yet they have so little consideration of it, and their mind is so intent upon other things, that they are under no apprehension at all of peril from it; instead of having the conscience to dread it, they have the curiosity to desire it. In answer to this,

1. He shews the folly of those that *impudently* wished for any of God's judgments; and made a jest of any of the terrors of the Lord. *To what end is it for you that the day of the Lord should come?* you will find it both *certain* and *bad*; not a thing to be bantered, for it is neither a thing to be questioned whether it will come or no; nor a thing to be turned off with a slight when it doth come. *The day of the Lord is darkness and not light*, ver. 18. *Shall it not be so?* ver. 20. Do not your own consciences tell you it will be so? that it will be *very dark*, and *no brightness in it*? Note, The day of the Lord will be a dark, dismal, gloomy, day to all impenitent sinners: the day of judgment will be so; and sometimes the day of their present trouble. And when God makes a day dark, all the world cannot make it light.

2. He shews the folly of those that *impatiently* wished for a change of God's judgments, in hopes the next will be better and more tolerable. They desire the day of the Lord, in hopes to mend themselves, tho' their hearts and lives be not amended, or however to know the worst. But the prophet tells them they know not what they ask, ver. 19. it is *as if a man did flee from a lion*, and a bear met him, a beast of prey more cruel and ravenous than a lion. Or as if a man to escape all dangers abroad went into the house for security, and leaned his hand on the wall to rest himself, and there a serpent bit him. Note, Those that are not reformed by the judgments of God will be pursued by them; and if they escape one, another stands ready to seize them: *fear*, and the pit and snare surround them, Isa. xxiv. 17, 18. It is madness therefore to defy the day of the Lord.

21. ¶ I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. 22. Though ye offer me burnt-offerings, and your meat-offerings, I will not except them: neither will I regard the peace-offerings of your fat beasts. 23. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. 24. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream. 25. Have ye offered unto me sacrifices and offerings in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel? 26. But ye have born the tabernacle of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which ye made to your selves. 27. Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is the God of hosts.

The scope of these verses is to shew how little God valued their shews of devotion, nay, how much he detested them, while they went on in their sins. Observe,

1. How *unpleasing*, nay, how *displeasing* their hypocritical services were to God. They had their *feast-days* at Bethel, in imitation of those at Jerusalem, in which they pretended to rejoice before God; they had their *solemn assemblies* for religious worship, in which they put on the gravity of those who come before God, as his people come, and sit before him as his people sit; they offered to God *burnt-offerings*, to the honour of God, together with the *meat-offerings*, that by the law were to be offered with them; they offered the *peace-offerings* to implore the favour of God, and they offered them of *fat beasts* they had, ver. 21, 22. In imitation likewise of the temple-musick, they had the *noise of their songs*, and the *melody of their viols*, ver. 23. vocal and instrumental musick, with which they praised God; with these services they hoped to make God amends for the sins they had committed, and to obtain leave to go on in sin; and therefore they were so far from being acceptable to God that they were *abominable*. He *hated*, he *despised* their *feast-days*, not only *despised* them as no valuable services done to him, but *hated* them as an affront and provocation to him, as we hate to see men dissemble with us, pretend a respect for us, when really they have none.

Nothing more *hateful*, more *despicable*, than hypocrisy; he that *blesseth his friend with a loud voice*, it shall be counted a curse, when it appears his heart is not with him. God will not *smell* in their *solemn assemblies*, for there is nothing in them that is grateful to him; but a great deal that is offensive. Their sacrifices are not

to him of a *sweet smelling savour*, as Noah's was, Gen. viii. 21. He will not accept them, he will not regard them, will not take any notice of them; he will not *hear the melody of their viols*, for when sin is a jar in the harmony it grates in his ears; *take it away*, saith God, I cannot bear it. Now this speaks, (1.) That sacrifice itself is of small account with God in comparison with moral duties; to love God, and our neighbour, is *better than all burnt-offering and sacrifice*. (2.) That the sacrifice of the wicked is really an abomination to him, Prov. xv. 8. Dissembled piety is double iniquity, and so it will be found, when if any place in hell be hotter than other, that will be the hypocrite's portion.

2. What it was that he required in order to the acceptableness of their sacrifices, and without which no sacrifice would be acceptable, ver. 24. *Let judgment run down as waters*, among you, and *righteousness as a mighty stream*. i. e. (1.) Let there be a general reformation of manners among you: let religion, God's judgment, and righteousness, have its due influence upon you, let your land be watered with it, and let it bear down all the opposition of vice and profaneness: let it run wide as overflowing waters, and yet run strong as a mighty stream. (2.) In particular, let justice be duly administered by magistrates and rulers; let not the current of it be stopped by partiality and bribery, but let it come freely as waters do, in the natural course, let it be pure as running waters, not muddied with corruption, or whatever may pervert justice: let it run like a mighty stream, and not suffer itself to be obstructed, or its course retarded by the fear of man; let all have free access to it, as to a common stream, and have benefit by it, as *trees planted by the rivers of waters*. The great thing laid to Israel's charge, was *turning judgment into worm-wood*, ver. 7. in that matter therefore they must reform, Zech. vii. 9. This was it that God desired more than sacrifices, Hos. vi. 6. 1 Sam. v. 22.

3. What little stress God had laid upon the law of sacrifices, tho' it was his own law, in comparison with the moral precepts, ver. 25. *Did ye offer unto me sacrifices in the wilderness forty years?* No, you did not; for the greatest part of that time, sacrifice was very much neglected, because of the unsettledness of their state: after the second year, the passover was not kept till they were come into Canaan, and other institutions were in like manner intermitted; and yet because God will have mercy and not sacrifice, he never imputed the omission to them as their fault, but continued his care of them and kindness to them; that was not it, but their murmuring and unbelief, for which God was displeased with them. He that so owned his people, tho' they did not sacrifice, when in other things they kept close to him, will certainly disown them tho' they do sacrifice, if in other things they depart from him. But tho' ritual sacrifices may thus be dispensed with, spiritual sacrifices will not, even justice and honesty will not excuse for the want of prayer and praise, a broken heart, and the love of God. Stephen quotes this passage, Acts vii. 42. to shew the Jews that they ought not to think strange at the repeal of the ceremonial law, when from the beginning it was comparatively made light of. Compare Jer. vii. 22, 23.

4. What little reason they had to expect that their sacrifices should be acceptable to God, when they and their fathers had been all along addicted to the worship of other gods. So some take, ver. 25. *Did you offer to me sacrifices?* i. e. to ME only? No, and therefore not at all to ME acceptably; for the law of worshipping the Lord our God is, *That him only we must serve*. But you have born the tabernacle of your Moloch, ver. 26. little shrines that you made to carry about with you, pocket-idols for your private superstition, when you durst not be seen to do it publicly. You have had the images of your Moloch, your king, probably representing the sun, that sits king among the heavenly bodies, and Chiun, or Remphan, as Stephen calls it, Acts vii. 43. after the LXX, which it is supposed represented Saturn, the highest of the seven planets: the worship of the sun, moon, and stars, was the most ancient, most general, and most plausible idolatry; they made to themselves the star of their god, some particular star which they took to be their god, or the name of which they gave to their god. This idolatry Israel was from the beginning prone to, Deut. iv. 19. and those that retain an affection for false gods cannot expect the favour of the true God.

5. What punishment God would inflict upon them for their persisting in idolatry, ver. 27. *I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus*. They were led captive by Satan into idolatry, and therefore God caused them to go into captivity among idolaters, and hurried them into a strange land, who were so fond of strange gods. They were carried beyond Damascus; their captivity by the Assyrians was far beyond that by the Syrians; for if lesser judgments do not work that for which they were sent, God will send greater. Or, The captivity of Israel under Salmanassar, was far beyond that of Damascus, under Tiglath-pelezer, and much more grievous and destructive, which was foretold, chap. i. 5. for as the sins of God's professing people are greater than the sins of others, so it may be expected their punishments will be proportionable. We find the spoil of Damascus, and that of Samaria carried off together by the king of Assyria, Isa. viii. 4. Stephen reads

reads it, *I will carry you away beyond Babylon*, Acts vii. 43. further than Judah shall be carried, so far further as not to return: And to make this sentence appear both the more *certain* and the more *dreadful*; he that passeth it calls himself *the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts*; and who is therefore able to execute the sentence, having *hosts* at command.

C H A P. VI.

In this chapter we have, (1.) A sinful people studying to put a slight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear trivial; confiding in their privileges and preeminences above other nations, ver. 2, 3. and their power, ver. 13. and wholly addicted to their pleasures, ver. 3—6. (2.) A serious prophet studying to put a weight upon God's threatenings, and to make them appear terrible, by setting forth the severity of those judgments that were coming upon those sensualists; ver. 7. God's abhorring them, and abandoning them and theirs to death, ver. 8—11. and bringing utter desolation upon them, since they would not be wrought upon by the methods he had taken for their conviction, ver. 12—14.

1. **W**O to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came. 2. Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hemath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? 3. Ye that put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; 4. That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; 5. That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of musick, like David; 6. That drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments: but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. 7. ¶ Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive, and the banquet of them that stretched themselves shall be removed.

The first words of the chapter are the contents of these verses; but they sound very strange and contrary to the sentiments of a vain world, *Wo to them that are at ease*; we are ready to say, *Happy they that are at ease*, that neither feel any trouble nor fear any, that lie soft and warm, and lay nothing to heart; and *wise* we think are they that do so, that bathe themselves in the delights of sense, and care not how the world goes: these are looked upon as *doing well for themselves* that do well for their bodies, and make much of them, but against them this *wo* is denounced, and we are here told what their *ease* is, and what the *wo* is.

1. Here is a description of their pride, security, and sensuality, for which God would reckon with them.

1. They were vainly conceited of their own dignities, and thought those would secure them from the judgments threatened, and be their defence against the wrath both of God and man. (1.) Those that dwell in Zion, thought that was honour and protection enough for them, and they might *there* be quiet from all fear of evil, because it was a *strong city*, well fortified both by nature and art, we read of Zion's *strong holds*, and her *bulwarks*: and because it was a royal city, where were set the thrones of the house of David; it was the head city of Judah, and therefore truly great; and especially because it was the holy city, where the temple was, and the testimony of Israel; they that dwelt there doubted not but that God's sanctuary would be a sanctuary to them, and would shelter them from his judgments. The temple of the Lord are these, Jer. vii. 4. They are *haughty because of the holy mountain*, Zeph. iii. 11. Note, Many are puffed up with pride, and rocked asleep in carnal security by their church-privileges, and the place they have in Zion. (2.) Those that dwelt in the mountain of Samaria, tho' it was not a *holy hill* like that of Zion, yet they trusted in it, because it was the metropolis of a potent kingdom, and perhaps in imitation of Jerusalem, was the head-quarters of its religion; and by tract of time the *hill of Shemer* became with them in as good repute as the *hill of Zion* ever was. They hoped for salvation from these hills and mountains. (3.) Both these two kingdoms valued themselves upon their relation to Israel, that prince with God, which they looked upon as making them the *chief of the nations*, more ancient and honourable than any of them. The first fruits of No. lxxiv.

the nations, so the word is, dedicated to God, and sanctifying the whole harvest: the *house of Israel* came to them, i. e. was divided into those kingdoms, Zion and Samaria were the mother cities of. Those that were at ease, were the princes and rulers, the great men, that were *chief of the nations*, chief of those two kingdoms, and to whom having their residence in Zion and Samaria, the whole house of Israel applied themselves for judgment. Note, It is hard to be *great* and not to be *proud*: great nations, and great men are apt to overvalue themselves, and to overlook their neighbours, because they think they a little *overtop* them.

But for a check to their pride and security, the prophet bids them take notice of these cities that were within the compass of their knowledge, that had been as illustrious in their time as ever Zion or Samaria were, and yet were destroyed, ver. 2. Go to Calneh, which was an ancient city, built by Nimrod, Gen. x. 10. and see what is come of that, it is now in ruins, so is Hemath the great, one of the chief cities of Syria; Sennacherib boasts of *destroying the gods of Hemath*. Gath was likewise made desolate by Hazael, and not long ago, 2 Kings xii. 17. Now were they better than these kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Yes, they were, and their border greater than your border, so that they had more reason than you to be confident of their own safety: yet you see what is become of them, and dare you be secure? Art thou better than populous No? Nah. iii. 8. Note, The examples of others ruin forbids us to be secure.

2. They persisted in their wicked courses, upon a presumption that they should never be called to an account for them, ver. 3. Ye put far away the evil day, the day of reckoning as a thing that shall never come; or ye look upon it as at such a distance, that it makes no impression at all upon you, ye put it far away, and think you can still put it yet further, and adjourn it *de die in diem*, and therefore ye cause the seat of violence to draw near, i. e. ye venture upon all acts of injustice and oppression, and have fellowship with the throne of iniquity, which frameth mischief by a law, Psal. xciv. 20. ye cause that to come near, as it that would be your protection from these judgments, which really ripens you for them. Note, Therefore men take sin to be near them, because they take judgments to be far off from them; but they deceive themselves, who thus mock God.

3. They indulged themselves in all manner of sensual pleasures and delights, ver. 4, 5, 6. These Israelites were perfect epicures and slaves to their appetites: their *dignities* (in consideration of which, they ought to have been examples of self-denial and mortification) they thought would justify them in their sensuality: the gains of their oppression and violence they thought would bear the charge of it; and they put the evil day at a distance, that that might give them no disturbance in it.

That which they are here charged with is not in it self sinful, these things might be soberly and moderately used, but they placed their happiness in the gratification of their carnal appetites; and tho' they were men in office, that had business to mind, they gave themselves up to their pleasures, spent their time in them, and threw away their thoughts, and cares, and estates, upon them; they were in these enjoyments as in their element: their hearts were upon them, they exceeded all bounds in them, and this at a time when God in his providence was calling them to weeping and mourning, Isa. xxii. 12, 13. when they were under guilt and wrath, and the judgments of God were ready to break in upon them, they called for wine and strong drink, presuming that to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant, Isa. lvi. 11. thus walking contrary to God, and setting his justice at defiance. (1.) They were extravagant in their furniture; nothing would serve them but *beds of ivory* to sleep upon, or to sit on at their meat; when *sackcloth and ashes* had better become them. (2.) They were lazy, and humoured themselves in the love of ease: they did not only lie down, but stretched themselves upon their couches, when they should have stirred up themselves to their business: they were willingly slothful, and took a pride in doing nothing: they abounded in superfluities, (so the margin reads it) when many of their poor brethren wanted necessities. (3.) They were nice and curious in their diet, must have every thing of the best, and abundance of it: they eat the lambs out of the flock, (lambs by wholesale;) and the calves out of the midst of the stall, the fattest they could lay their hand on; and these perhaps not out of their own flock, and their own stall, but taken by oppression from the poor. (4.) They were merry and jovial, and diverted themselves at their feasts, with musick and singing; they chant to the sound of the viol, sing and play in consort, and they invent new-fashioned instruments of musick, striving herein, more than in any thing else, to excel their ancestors; they set their wits on work to contrive how to please their fancy. Some men never shew their ingenuity but in their luxury; on that they bestow all their faculty of invention and contrivance. They invent instruments of musick like David; entertain themselves with that which formerly used to be the entertainment of kings only. Or it intimates their profaneness in their mirth, they mimicked the temple musick, and made a jest of that, because it may be it was old-fashioned, and they took a pride

in bantering it, as the Babylonians did, when they urged the captives to sing them the *songs of Zion*; such was Belshazzar's profaneness, when he drank wine in temple-bowls, and such theirs that sing vain and loose songs in psalm-tunes, on purpose to ridicule a divine institution. (5.) They drink to excess, and never think they can pour down enough: they *drink wine in bowls*, not in glasses, or cups, (as *Jer. xxxv. 5.*) they hate to be stinted and must have large draughts, and therefore make use of vessels that they can steal a draught out of. (6.) They affect the strongest perfumes; they *anoint themselves with the chief ointments*, to please the smell, and to make them more in love with their own bodies; and to guard against those prefaces of putrefaction which they carry about with them while they live. No ordinary ointments would serve their turn, they must have *the chief*, such as were far-fetched and dear-bought, when cheaper would have served as well.

4. They had no concern at all for the interests of the church of God, and of the nation, that were sinking and going to decay, *They are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph*; the church of God including both the kingdoms of Judah and Israel (which are called Joseph, *Psal. lxxx. 1.*) was in distress, invaded, insulted, and broken in upon; their own kingdom which they were intrusted with the government of, the affairs of which they were the directors of, the peace of which they were the conservators of, great *breaches* were made upon it, upon its peace and welfare, and they were so besotted that they were not aware of them, so indulgent of their pleasures that they never laid them to heart, and had such an aversion to the thing called *business*, that they were in no care or concern to get them *repaired*. It is all one to them whether the nation sink or swim, so that they can but lie at ease, and live in pleasure. Particular persons that belonged to Joseph were in affliction, and they took no cognizance of their case, of the wrongs and hardships they sustained, and the troubles they were in, nor took any care to relieve them, and right them; contrary to the temper of holy Job, who when he was in prosperity *wept with him that was in misery*, and his soul was grieved for the poor, *Job xxx. 25.* Some think in calling the afflicted church Joseph here, there is an allusion to the story of Pharaoh's butler, who when he was preferred to give the cup again into his master's hand, *remembered not Joseph, but forgot him*, *Gen. xl. 21, 23.* Thus these *drank wine in bowls*, but were not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. Note, Those are commonly careless of others troubles that are set upon their own pleasures; and it is a great offence to God when his church is in affliction, and we are not grieved for it, nor lay it to heart.

2. Here is the doom passed upon them, *ver. 7. Therefore now shall they go captive with the first that go captive*, and shall fall into all the miseries that attend captives; and the *banquet of them that stretched themselves upon their couches shall be removed*. Their plenty shall be taken from them, and they from it, because they made it the food and fuel of their lusts. (1.) They that lived in luxury shall lose even their liberty; and by being brought into servitude, shall be justly punished for the abuse of their dignity and dominion. (2.) They that trusted in the delights and pleasures of their own land, shall be carried away into a strange land, and so made ashamed of their pride and confidence; they shall *go captive*. (3.) They that placed their happiness in the pleasures of sense, and set their hearts upon them, shall be deprived of those pleasures, their *banquet* shall be removed, and they shall know what it is to fare hard. (4.) Those that stretched themselves, shall be made to contract themselves, and to come in a less compass. (5.) Those that put the evil day far from them, shall find it nearer to them than it is to others; they shall *go captive with the first*, who flattered themselves with hopes that if trouble did come, they would be the last that should be seized by it. Those are ripening apace for trouble themselves, that lay not to heart the troubles of others, and of the church of God. Those that give themselves to mirth, when God calls them to mourning, will find it is a sin that shall not go unpunished, *Isa. xxii. 14.*

8. The Lord GOD hath sworn by himself, saith the LORD, the God of hosts, I abhor the excellency of Jacob, and hate his palaces: therefore will I deliver up the city, with all that is therein. 9. And it shall come to pass, if there remain ten men in one house, that they shall die. 10. And a mans uncle shall take him up, and he that burneth him, to bring out the bones out of the house, and shall say unto him that is by the sides of the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* and he shall say, No: then shall he say, Hold thy tongue; for we may not make mention of the name of the LORD. 11. For behold, the LORD commandeth, and he will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts. 12. ¶ Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into

hemlock. 13. Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength? 14. But behold, I will raise up against you a nation, O house of Israel, saith the LORD the God of hosts, and they shall afflict you from the entering in of Hemath unto the river of the wilderness.

In the former part of the chapter we had these secure Israelites loading themselves with pleasures, as if they could never be made *merry enough*; here we have God loading them with punishments, as if they could never be made *miserable enough*: And observe,

(1.) How *strongly* this burthen is *bound on*, not to be shaken off by their presumption and security; for it is bound by the Lord, the God of hosts, by his mighty, his almighty, hand, which none can resist; it is bound with an oath, which puts the sentence past revocation, *The Lord God hath sworn, and he will not repent*, and since he could swear by no greater, he hath sworn by himself. How dreadful, how miserable, is the case of those whose ruin, whose eternal ruin God himself hath sworn, who can execute his purpose, and cannot alter it?

(2.) How *heavy* this burthen *lies*; let us see the particulars.

1. God will *abhor* and *abandon* them, and that speaks misery enough, all misery. *I abhor the excellency of Jacob*; all that which they are proud of, and value themselves upon, and for which they call and count themselves the *chief of the nations*. Their visible church-membership, and the privileges of that, their temple, altar, and priesthood, these were more than any thing the excellencies of Jacob; but when these were profaned and polluted by sin, God *abhorred* them, he *hated* and *despised* them, *chap. v. 21.* Note, God *abhors* that *form of godliness* which hypocrites keep up, while they abhor the power of it. And if he abhors their temple for the iniquity of that, no marvel that he *hates their palaces*, for the injustice and oppression he finds there. Note, That creature which we take such a complacency, and put such a confidence in, as to make it a rival with God, is thereby made abominable to him. He *hates the palaces* of sinners, for the sake of the wickedness of them which dwell therein, *Prov. iii. 33. The curse of the Lord is in the house of the wicked*: And if God *abhor* them, presently it follows, He will *deliver up the city, with all that is therein*, deliver it up into the hands of the enemy that will lay it waste, and make a prey of all its wealth. Note, Those that are abhorred and abandoned of God, are undone to all intents and purposes.

2. There shall be a great and general mortality among them, *ver. 9. If there remain ten men in one house* that have escaped the sword of the enemy, yet they shall be met with another way, they shall all die by famine or pestilence. In the most sickly times, if there be ten in a house, one may hope at least the one half of them will escape, according to the proportion of two in a bed, *one taken*, and the *other left*; but here not *one of ten* shall live to bury the rest. Another instance of the greatness of the mortality is, *ver. 10.* that the nearest relations of the dead, shall be forced with their own hands to wind up their bodies and bury them, for want of other hands to be employed in it; that is all that the *next of kin* to whom the right of redemption belongs can do for them, and with great reluctancy will they do that. It intimates that the young people shall be cut off soonest; for the *uncle* that survives is ordinarily the *senior* relation: When the *uncle* comes with the sexton, or *him that burneth*, to bring out the bones out of the house, he shall say, to him that he sees next about the house, *Is there yet any with thee?* Are there any left alive? And he shall say, No, this is the last; now the whole family is cut off by death, and neither root nor branch remains. But that which makes this judgment the more grievous is, That their hearts seem to be hardened under it. When he that was found by the sides of the house began to enter into discourse with those that were carrying off the dead, they shall say, *Hold thy tongue*; do not stand preaching to us about the hand of providence in this calamity, for we may not make mention of the name of the Lord; God is so angry with us that there is no speaking to him, he is so extream to mark what we do amiss, that we dare not so much as make mention of his name. Thus the foolishness of men *perverteth their way*, and brings them into distress, and then their heart *fretted against the Lord*: Even then they will not take notice of his hand, nor suffer those about them to do it.

Perhaps it was forbidden by some of the idolatrous kings to make mention of the name of *Jehovah*, as by the law of Moses it was forbidden to make mention of the names of the heathen-gods; we may not do it without incurring the penalty. Note, Those hearts are wretchedly hardened indeed that will not be brought to make mention of God's name, and to worship him, when the hand of God is gone out against them, and when, as here, sickness and death are in their families: Thus those *heap up wrath*, who cry not when God binds them.

3. Their houses shall be destroyed, *ver. 11.* God will smite the great house with breaches, and the little house with clefts, they shall both be cracked, so as to lose their beauty and strength, and to be hastening towards a fall. The princes palaces are not above the

the rebukes of divine justice, nor the poor man's cottages beneath it; neither shall escape when sin has marked them for ruin, God will find ways to bring it about. It is by order from him *that breaches are made*.

(3.) How *justly* they are thus burthened; if we understand the matter aright, we will say, The Lord is righteous.

1. The methods used for their reformation had been all fruitless and ineffectual, *ver. 12. Shall horses run upon the rock? to hurl or harrow the ground there? Or will one plow there with oxen?* No, for there will be no profit to countervail the pains; God had sent them his prophets to *break up their fallow-ground*, but they found them as hard and inflexible as the rock, rough and rugged, and they could do no good with them, nor work upon them, and therefore they shall not attempt it any more: They will not be *reclaimed*, and therefore shall not be *reproved*, but quite *abandoned*. Note, Those who will not be husbanded as fields and vineyards, shall be rejected as barren rocks and deserts, *Heb. vi. 7, 8*.

2. They had abused their power to the wrong and oppression of many, whose injured cause the sovereign Judge would not only right but revenge. *Ye have turned judgment into gall*, which is nauseous, and *the fruit of righteousness into hemlock*, which is noxious; it would *make one sick* to see how those that were intrusted with the administration of publick justice, bear down equity with *that power* with which they ought to have defended and supported it, and so turned its own artillery against itself. Note, When our services of God are soured with sin, his providences will justly be embittered to us.

3. They had set the judgments of God at defiance, and confiding in their own strength, thought themselves a match for omnipotence, *ver. 13. They rejoiced in a thing of nought*, pleased themselves with a fancy that no evil should befall them, tho' they had no ground at all for *that confidence*, nothing to trust to *that would bear any weight*. They said, *Have we not taken to us horns*, are we not arrived to great dignity and dominion, have we not *pushed down* our enemies, and *pushed on* our victories, and this *by our own strength*, our own conduct and courage, our own wealth and military force, who then need we be afraid of? Who then need we make court to? Not God himself. Note, Prosperity and success commonly make men secure and haughty; and those that have *done much* think they can *do any thing*, any thing *without God*, nay, any thing against him: But those who trust in *their own strength* rejoice in a *thing of nought*, and so they will find. Probably they did not say this with their lips, *totidem verbis*, but it was the language of *their hearts*, and of *their actions*, both which God understands.

(4.) How *easily* and *effectually* this burthen shall be brought upon them, *ver. 14. He that brings it upon them is the Lord the God of hosts*, who both may do, and can do, what he pleaseth; who has all creatures at his command, and who, when he has work to do, will not want instruments to do it with; tho' they are the house of Israel, yet he will *raise up against them a nation* which they feared not, but had many a time hoped in, even the Assyrians, and this nation shall *afflict them*, bring them into straits, and put them to pain, from the *entering in of Hamath*, in the north, to the *river of the wilderness*, the river of Egypt, Sihor or Nile in the south. The whole nation hath shared in the iniquity, and therefore must expect to share in the calamity. Note, When men are any way instruments of *affliction* to us, we must see God *raising them up against us*, for they are *his hand*, the rod, the sword in his hand. The Lord hath bidden Shimei curse David.

C H A P. VII.

In this chapter we have (1.) God contending with Israel, by the judgments brought on their land. (1.) They are threatened with lesser judgments, but are reprieved, and the judgments turned away at the prayer of Amos, *ver. 1—6*. (2.) God's patience is at length worn out by their obstinacy, and they are rejected, and sentenced to utter ruin, *ver. 7—9*. (2.) Israel contending with God, by the opposition given to his prophet. (1.) Amaziah informs against Amos, *ver. 10, 11*, and doth what he can to rid the country of him as a publick nuisance, *ver. 12, 13*. (2.) Amos justifies himself in what he did as a prophet, *ver. 14, 15*, and denounceth the judgments of God against Amaziah his prosecutor, *ver. 16, 17*, for when the contest is between God and man, it is easy to foresee, it is very easy to foretell who will come off with the worst of it.

1. **T**HUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me, and behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, and lo it was the latter growth after the kings mow-

ings. 2. And it came to pass, *that* when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 3. The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD. 4. ¶ Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me, and behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. 5. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. 6. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD. 7. ¶ Thus he shewed me, and behold, the Lord stood upon a wall *made* by a plumb-line, with a plumb-line in his hand. 8. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumb-line. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel, I will not again pass by them any more. 9. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.

We here see that God bears long, but he will not bear always with a provoking people; both these God here *shewed* the prophet; *Thus hath the Lord God shewed me*, *ver. 1.* and again, *ver. 4.* and thus he *shewed me*, *ver. 7.* he shewed him what was present, foreshewed him what was to come; gave him the knowledge both of what he *did*, and of what he *designed*; for the Lord God revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets, *chap. iii. 7*.

1. We have here two instances of God's sparing mercy, remembered in the midst of judgment, the narratives of which are so like one another, that they will be best considered together, and very considerable they are.

1. God is here coming forth against this sinful nation, first by one judgment, and then by another.

1. He begins with the judgment of *famine*; the prophet saw this in vision: He saw God forming grasshoppers or locusts, and bringing them up upon the land to eat up the fruits of it, and so to strip it of its beauty, and starve its inhabitants, *ver. 1.* God formed these grasshoppers, not only as they were his creatures, and much of the wisdom and power of God appears in the formation of minute animals, as much in the structure of an ant, as of an elephant; but as they were instruments of his wrath, God is said to *frame evil* against a sinful people, *Jer. xviii. 11.* These grasshoppers were framed on purpose to eat up the grass of the land; and vast numbers of them were prepared accordingly: They were sent in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth, after the king's mowings. See here how the judgment was mitigated by the mercy that went before it; God could have sent these insects to eat up the grass at the beginning of the first growth, in the spring, when the grass was most needed, was most plentiful, and was the best in its kind; but God suffered that to grow, and suffered them to gather it in, the king's mowings were safely housed, for the king himself is served from the field, *Eccl. v. 9.* and could as ill be without his mowings, as without any other branch of his revenues; Uzziah was now king of Judah, who loved husbandry, *2 Chron. xxvi. 10.* But the grasshoppers were commissioned to eat up only the latter growth; the edgrew, (we call it in the country) the after-grass, which is of little value in comparison with the former.

The mercies which God gives us, and continues to us, are more and more valuable than those he removes from us; which is a good reason why we should be thankful, and not complain. The remembrance of the mercies of the former growth should make us submissive to the will of God, when we meet with disappointments in the latter growth. The prophet in vision saw this judgment prevailing far. These grasshoppers eat up the grass of the land; which should have been for the cattle; which the owners must of course suffer by. Some understand this figuratively, of a wasting, destroying, army brought upon them. In the days of Jeroboam, the kingdom of Israel began to recover itself from the desolations it had been under in the former reigns, *2 Kings xiv. 25.* the latter growth shot up, after the mowings of the kings of Syria, which we read of, *2 Kings xiii. 3.* And then God commissioned the king of Assyria, with an army of caterpillars to come upon them and lay them waste; that nation spoken of, *chap. vi. 14.* which afflicted them from the entering of Hamath, to the river of the wilderness, which seems to refer to *2 Kings xiv. 25.* where Jeroboam is said to have restored their coast from the entering of Hamath, to the sea of the plain. God can then bring all to ruin, when we think all is in some good measure repaired.

2. He proceeds to the judgment of fire, to shew that he has many arrows in his quiver, many ways of humbling a sinful nation, *ver. 4. The Lord God called to contend by fire.* He contended;

tended; for God's judgments upon a people, are his *controversies* with them; in them he prosecutes his action against them; and his controversies are neither causeless nor groundless. He *called to contend*, he did by his prophets give them notice of his controversy, and drew up a declaration, setting forth the meaning of it. Or he *called* for his angels, or other ministers of his justice that were to be employed in it: A fire was kindled among them; by which is meant, either a great drought, the heat of the sun which should have warmed the earth scorched it, and burnt up the roots of the grass which the locusts had eaten the spires of: Or, a raging fever, which was as a fire in their bones, which devoured and eat up multitudes: Or lightning, fire from heaven, which consumed their houses, as Sodom and Gomorrah were consumed, *chap. iv. 11*. Or it was the burning of their cities, either by accident, or by the hand of the enemy, for fire and sword used to go together; thus were the towns wasted, as the country was by the grasshoppers. This fire which God called for did terrible execution, it devoured the great deep, as the fire that fell from heaven on Elijah's altar licked up the water that was in the trench. Tho' the water designed for the stopping and quenching of this fire were as the water of the great deep, yet it devoured it; for who or what can stand before a fire kindled by the wrath of God? It did eat up a part, a great part of the cities where it was sent; or it was as the fire at Taberah, which consumed the outermost parts of the camp, *Numb. xi. 1*. when some were overthrown, others were as brands plucked out of the fire. All deserved to be devoured, but it eat up only a part, for God doth not stir up all his wrath.

2. The prophet goes forth to meet him in the way of his judgments, and by prayer seeks to turn away his wrath, *ver. 2*. When he saw in vision what dreadful work these caterpillars made, that they had eaten up in a manner all the grass of the land, he foresaw they would do so, if suffered to go on: Then he said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee, *ver. 2*. cease, I beseech thee, *ver. 5*. He that foretold the judgment in his preaching to the people, yet deprecated it in his intercessions for them. He is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee; it was the business of prophets to pray for those whom they prophesied to, and so to make it appear, That tho' they denounced, they did not desire, the woful day. Therefore God shewed his prophets the evils coming, that they might befriend the people, not only by warning them, but by praying for them, and standing in the gap, to turn away God's wrath, as Moses that great prophet often did. Now observe here,

(1.) The prophet's prayer. O Lord God, (1.) *Forgive, I beseech thee*, and take away the sin, *ver. 2*. He sees sin at the bottom of the trouble, and therefore concludes that the pardon of sin must be at the bottom of the deliverance, and prays for that in the first place. Note, Whatever calamity we are under, personal or publick, the forgiveness of sin is that which we should be most earnest with God for. (2.) *Cease, I beseech thee*, and take away the judgment; cease the fire, cease the controversy; cause thine anger towards us to cease. This follows upon the forgiveness of sin: Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. Note, Those whom God contends with will soon find what need they have to cry for a cessation of arms; and there are hopes that tho' God has begun and proceeded far in his controversy, yet it may be obtained.

(2.) The prophet's plea to enforce this prayer; *by whom shall Jacob arise, for he is small?* *ver. 2*. and it is repeated, *ver. 5*. and yet no vain repetition. Christ in his agony prayed earnestly, saying the same words, again and again. (1.) It is Jacob that he is interceding for; the professing people of God, called by his name, calling on his name, the seed of Jacob his chosen, and in covenant with him. It is Jacob's case that is in this prayer spread before the God of Jacob. (2.) *Jacob is small*, very small already, weakened and brought low by former judgments, and therefore if these come he will be quite ruined and brought to nothing. The people are few, the dust of Jacob is now soon counted, which when time was, was innumerable: Those few are feeble; it is the worm Jacob, *Isa. xli. 14*. they are unable to help themselves or one another. Sin will soon make a great people small; will diminish the numerous, impoverish the plenteous, and weaken the courageous. (3.) *By whom shall he arise?* He is fallen and cannot help himself up, and he has no friend to help him, none to raise him, unless the hand of God do it; what will become of him then, if the hand that should raise him be stretched out against him? Note, When the state of God's church is very low and very helpless, it is proper to be recommended by our prayers to God's pity.

3. God graciously lets fall his controversy in answer to the prophet's prayer, once and again, *ver. 3*. The Lord repented for this; he did not change his mind, for he is in one mind, and who can turn him? but he changed his way, took another course, and determined to deal in mercy and not in wrath. He said, *It shall not be*: And again, *ver. 6*. This also shall not be. The caterpillars were countermanded, were remanded, a stop put to the progress of the fire, and thus a reprieve was granted. See the power of prayer, of effectual fervent prayer, how much it avails, what great things it prevails for: A stop has many a time been put to a judgment, by making supplication to the judge. This was not the first time that Israel's life was begged, and so saved. See what a blessing praying people, praying prophets, are to a land, and there-

fore how highly they ought to be valued. Ruin had many a time broken in, if they had not stood in the breach, and made good the pass. See how ready, how swift God is to show mercy, how he waits to be gracious; Amos moves for a reprieve, and obtains it, because God inclines to grant it, and looks about to see, if there be any that will intercede for it, *Isa. lvi. 16*. Nor are former reprieves objected against further instances of mercy, but are rather encouragements to pray and hope for them. This also shall not be, no more than that. It is the glory of God, that he multiplies to pardon, that he spares and forgives to more than seventy times seven times.

2. We have here the rejection of those at last, who had been often reprieved, and yet never reclaimed, reduced to straits, and yet never reduced to their God and their duty. This is represented to the prophet by a vision, *ver. 7, 8*. and an express prediction of utter ruin, *ver. 9*.

1. The vision is of a plumb-line, a line with a plummet at the end of it, such as masons and bricklayers use, to run up a wall by, that they may work it straight and true, and by rule. (1.) Israel was a wall, a strong wall, which God himself had reared, as a bulwark, or wall of defence, to his sanctuary, which he set up among them. The Jewish church faith of herself, *Cant. viii. 10*. I am a wall, and my breasts like towers. This wall was made by a plumb-line, very exact, and firm. So happy was its constitution, so well compact, and every thing so well ordered according to the model; it had long stood fast as a wall of brass; but (2.) God now stands upon this wall not to hold it up, but to tread it down; or rather to consider what he shall do with it; he stands upon it with a plumb-line in his hand to take measure of it, that it may appear to be a bowing, bulging wall, *rectum est index sui & obliqui*, this plumb-line would discover where it was crooked: Thus God would bring the people of Israel to the trial, would discover their wickedness, and shew wherein they erred; and he would likewise bring his judgments upon them according to equity, would set a plumb-line in the midst of them, to mark how far their wall must be pulled down; as David measured the Moabites with a line, *2 Sam. viii. 2*. to put them to death: And when God is coming to the ruin of a people, he is said to lay judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; for when he punisheth it is with exactness. It is now determined, I will not again pass by them any more; they shall not be spared, and reprieved as they have been; their punishment shall not be turned away, *chap. i. 3*. Note, God's patience that has long been sinned against, will at length be sinned away; and the time will come when those that have been spared often, shall be no longer spared. My Spirit shall not always strive. After frequent reprieves, yet a day of execution will come.

2. The prediction is of utter ruin, *ver. 9*. (1.) The body of the people shall be destroyed, with all those things that were their ornament and defence. They are here called Isaac as well as Israel; the house of Isaac, *ver. 16*. Some think in allusion to the signification of Isaac's name, it is laughter; they shall become a jest among all their neighbours; they shall laugh at them. The desolation shall fasten upon their high places, and their sanctuaries; either their castles or their temples, both built on high places; their castles they thought safe, and their temples sacred as sanctuaries; these shall be laid waste, to punish them for their idolatry, and to make them ashamed of their carnal confidences, which were the two things for which God had a controversy with them. When these were made desolate, they might read their sin and folly in their punishment. (2.) The royal family shall sink first, as an earnest of the ruin of the whole kingdom. I will rise against the house of Jeroboam, Jeroboam the second, who was now king of the ten tribes; his family was extirpated in his son Zecharias, that was slain with the sword before the people, by Shallum who conspired against him, *2 Kings xv. 10*. How unrighteous soever the instruments were, God was righteous, and in them God rose up against that idolatrous family. Even kings houses will be no shelter against the sword of God's wrath.

10. ¶ Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent to Jeroboam king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel: the land is not able to bear all his words. 11. For thus Amos saith, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their own land. 12. Also Amaziah said unto Amos, O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and prophesy there. 13. But prophesy not again any more at Beth-el: for it is the kings chapel, and it is the kings court. 14. ¶ Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophets son; but I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore-fruit. 15. And the LORD took me as I followed the flock, and the LORD said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel. 16. ¶ Now therefore hear thou the word of the LORD: thou sayest, prophesy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against

against the house of Isaac. 17. Therefore thus saith the LORD, thy wife shall be an harlot in the city, and thy sons and thy daughters shall fall by the sword, and thy land shall be divided by line: and thou shalt die in a polluted land, and Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land.

One would have expected, that what we met with in the former part of the chapter should (1.) Have awakened the people to repentance, when they saw that therefore they were *reprieved*, that they might have *space to repent*, and that they could not obtain a pardon unless they did repent. (2.) That it should have endeared the prophet Amos to them; who had not only shewed his good-will to them in praying against the judgments that *invaded* them, but had prevailed to *turn away* those judgments; which if they had had any sense of gratitude, would have gained him an interest in their affections; but it fell out quite contrary; they continue impenitent, and the next news we hear of Amos is, he is persecuted. Note, As it is the praise of great saints that they pray for those who are enemies to them, so it is the shame of many great sinners that they are enemies to those who pray for them, *Psal.* xxxv. 13, 15.—cix. 4. We have here,

1. The malicious information brought to the king against the prophet Amos, *ver.* 10, 11. The informer was Amaziah the *priest of Beth-el*, the chief of the priests that ministered to the golden-calf there, the *president* of Bethel, so some read it, that had the principal hand in civil affairs there. He complained against Amos, not only because he prophesied without licence from him, but because he prophesied against *his* altars, which would soon be deserted and demolished if Amos's preaching could but have gained credit: Thus the *shrine-makers* at Ephesus hated Paul, because his preaching tended to spoil their trade. Note, Great *pretenders* to sanctity, are commonly the worst enemies to those who are really sanctified. Priests have been the most bitter persecutors. Amaziah brings an information to Jeroboam against Amos: Observe,

(1.) The crime he is *charged* with, is no less than *treason*, *Amos hath conspired against thee*, to depose and murder thee, he aims at succeeding thee, and therefore is taking the most effectual way to weaken thee. He sows the seeds of sedition in the hearts of the good subjects of the king, and makes them disaffected to him and his government, that he may draw them by degrees from their allegiance; upon this account *the land is not able to bear his words*; it is sily insinuated to the king that the *country* was exasperated against him, and it is given in as *their* sense, That his preaching was intolerable, and such as no body could be reconciled to, such as the *times* would by no means bear, that is, the *men of the times* would not. Both the *impudence* of his supposed treason, and the ill *influence* it would have upon the country are intimated in that part of the charge, that he conspired against the king in the midst of the house of Israel. Note, It is no new thing for the accusers of the brethren to mis-represent them as enemies to the king and kingdom, as traitors to their prince, and troublers of the land, when really they are the best friends to both. And it is common for designing men to assert that as the sense of the country, which is far from being so. And yet here, I doubt, it was too true, that the *people* could not bear plain dealing no more than the *priests*.

(2.) The words laid in the indictment for the support of this charge, *ver.* 11. *Amos saith*, and they have witnesses ready to prove it, *Jeroboam shall die by the sword*; and *Israel shall be led away captive*; and from hence they infer, that he is an enemy to his king and country, and not to be tolerated. See the malice of Amaziah, he doth not tell the king how Amos had interceded for Israel, and by his intercession had turned away first one judgment, and then another, and did not let fall his intercession till he saw the decree was gone forth: He doth not tell him that these threatenings were conditional, and he had often assured them, that if they would repent and reform, the ruin should be prevented. Nay, It was not true that he said *Jeroboam shall die by the sword*, nor did he so die, 2 *Kings* xiv. 28. but that God would *rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword*, *ver.* 9. God's prophets and ministers have often had occasion to make David's complaint, *Psal.* lvi. 5. *Every day they wrest my words*. But shall it be made the watchman's crime, when he sees the sword coming, to give warning to the *people*, that they may get themselves secured? Or the physician's crime, to tell his *patient* of the danger of his disease, that he may use means for the cure of it? What enemies are foolish men to themselves, to their own *peace*, to their best friends! It doth not appear that Jeroboam took any notice of this information; perhaps he revered a *prophet*, and stood more in awe of the divine authority than Amaziah, his *priest*, did.

2. The method he used to persuade Amos to withdraw and quit the country, *ver.* 12, 13. when he could not gain his *point* with the king to have Amos imprisoned, banished, or put to death, or at least to have him frightened into silence or flight, he tried what he could do by fair means to get rid of him; insinuated himself into his acquaintance, and with all the arts of wheedling, endeavoured to persuade him to go *prophesy* in the *land of Judah*, and not at Bethel. He owns him to be a *seer*, and doth not pretend to enjoin him silence, but suggests to him, (1.) That Bethel

was not a proper place for him to exercise his ministry in, for it was *the king's chapel*, or *sanctuary*, where he had his idols, and their altars and priests; and it was *the king's court*, or *the house of the kingdom*, where the royal family resided, and where were set the thrones of judgment, and therefore *prophesy not any more* here: And why not? (1.) Because Amos is too plain and blunt a preacher for the court and the king's chapel: They *that wear silk and fine clothing*, and speak silken soft words, are fit for kings palaces. (2.) Because the worship *that* is in the king's chapel will be a continual vexation and trouble to Amos, let him therefore get far enough from it, and what the eye sees not the heart grieves not for. (3.) Because it was not fit that the king and his house should be affronted in their own court and chapel, by the reproofs and threatenings which Amos was continually teasing them with in the name of the Lord; as if it were the prerogative of the *prince*, and the privilege of the *peers*, when they are running head-long upon a *precipice* not to be told of their danger. (4.) Because he could not expect any countenance or encouragement there, but on the contrary to be bantered and ridiculed by some, and to be threatened and brow-beaten by others; however, he could not think to make any converts there, or to persuade any from that idolatry, which was supported by the authority and example of the king. To preach his doctrine there, was but (as we say) to run his head against a post, and therefore *prophesy no more* there. But, (2.) He persuades him that the land of Judah was the fittest place for him to set up in; *flee thee away* thither with all speed, and *there eat bread*, and *prophesy there*; there thou wilt be safe, there thou wilt be welcome, the king's court and chapel there are on thy side; the prophets there will second thee, the priests and princes there will take notice of thee, and allow thee an honourable maintenance. See here, (1.) How willing *wicked* men are to get clear of their faithful reprovers, and how ready to *say to the seers, see not*, or *see not for us*; the two witnesses were a *torment* to them that dwelt on the earth, *Rev.* xi. 10. and it were indeed pity that men should be *tormented before the time*, but that it is in order to the preventing of eternal torment. (2.) How apt *worldly* men are to measure others by themselves; Amaziah, as a *priest*, aimed at nothing but the *profits* of his *place*, and he thought Amos, as a *prophet*, had the same views; and therefore adviseth him to *prophesy* there, where he might *eat bread*, where he might be sure to have his belly full; whereas Amos was to *prophesy* where God appointed him, and where there was most need of him, not where he would get most money. Note, Those that make gain their godliness, and are governed by the hopes of wealth and preferment themselves, are ready to think these the most powerful inducements with others also.

3. The reply which Amos made to these suggestions of Amaziah's; he did not *consult with flesh and blood*, nor was it his care to enrich himself, but to *make full proof of his ministry*, and to be *found faithful* in the discharge of it; not to sleep in a whole skin, but to keep a good conscience, and therefore he resolves to abide by his post, and in answer to Amaziah,

1. He justifies himself in his constant adherence to his work, and to his place, *ver.* 14, 15. and that which he is sure will not only *bear him out* but *bind him* to it is, that he had a divine warrant and commission for it. *I was no prophet, or prophet's son*, neither born or bred to the office, not originally designed for a prophet, as Samuel and Jeremiah; not educated in the schools of the prophets, as many others were; but *I was a herdsman*, a keeper of cattle, and a *gatherer of sycomore fruit*; our sycomores bear no fruit, but it seems theirs did, which Amos gathered either for his cattle, or for himself and his family, or to sell: he was a plain country-man, bred up and employed in country-work, and used to country-fare. He *followed the flocks*, as well as the herds, and thence God *took him*, and bid him, *go, prophesy to his people Israel*, deliver to them such messages as he should from time to time *receive from the Lord*. God made him a *prophet*, and a *prophet to them*; appointed him his work, and appointed him his *post*. Therefore he ought not to be silenced, for (1.) He could produce a divine commission for what he did; he did not run before he was sent, but pleads as Paul, that he was *called to be an apostle*, and men will find it is *at their peril* if they contradict and oppose any that come in God's name; if they say to his *seers, see not*, or *silence* those whom he has bid *speak*, such *fight against God*. An affront done to an ambassador is an affront to the prince that sends him. Those that have a warrant from God, ought not to *fear the face of man*. (2.) The mean character he wore before he received that commission, strengthened his warrant, so far was it from weakening it. (1.) He had no thoughts at all of ever being a prophet, and therefore his prophesying could not be imputed to a *raised* expectation, or a *heated* imagination, but purely to a divine impulse. (2.) He was not educated or instructed in the art or mystery of *prophesying*, and therefore he must have his abilities for it immediately from God, which is an undeniable proof that he had his mission from him. The apostles being originally unlearned and ignorant men, evidenced that they owed their knowledge to their having *been with Jesus*, *Acts* iv. 13. when the treasure is put into such earthen vessels, it is thereby made to appear, that the *excellency of the power is of God, and not of man*, 2 *Cor.* iv. 7. (3.) He had an honest

honest calling, by which he could comfortably maintain himself and his family, and therefore did not need to prophesy for bread, as Amaziah suggested, *ver. 12.* did not take it up as a trade to live by, but as a *trust* to honour God, and do good with. (4.) He had all his days been accustomed to a plain homely way of living, among poor husbandmen, and never affected either gaities or dainties, and therefore would not have thrust himself so near the king's court and chapel, if the business God had called him to had not called him thither. (5.) Having been so meanly bred he could not have had courage to speak to kings and great men, especially to speak such bold and provoking things to them, if he had not been animated by a greater spirit than his own. If God, that sent him, had not strengthened him, he could not thus have *set his face as a flint*, *Isa. 1. 7.* Note, God often chuseth the *weak and foolish things of the world* to confound the wise and mighty; and a *herdman of Tekoa* puts to shame a *priest of Bethel*, when he receives from God authority and ability to act for him.

2. He condemns Amaziah for the opposition he gave him, and denounceth the judgments of God against him; not from any private resentment or revenge, but in the name of the Lord, and by authority from him, *ver. 16, 17.* Amaziah would not suffer Amos to preach at all, and therefore he is particularly ordered to preach *against him*; now therefore hear thou the word of the Lord, hear it and tremble. Those that cannot bear general woes, may expect woes of their own. The sin he is charged with is, forbidding Amos to prophesy; we do not find that he beat him, or put him in the stocks, only he enjoined him silence, *Prophecy not against Israel, and drop not thy word against the house of Isaac*; he must not only not *thunder* against them, but he must not so much as *drop a word* against them; he cannot bear, no, not the most gentle distilling of that rain, that small rain. Let him therefore hear his doom.

1. For the oppression he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon himself, and his family. This was the sin that filled the measure of his iniquity: (1.) He shall have no comfort in any of his relations, but be afflicted in those that were nearest to him. *His wife shall be a harlot*, either she shall be forcibly abused by the soldiers, as the Levite's concubine by the men of Gibeah, they *ravished the women in Zion*, *Lam. v. 11.* Or she shall herself wickedly play the harlot, which tho' her sin, her great sin, would be his affliction, his great affliction and reproach, and a just punishment upon him for promoting spiritual whoredom. Sometimes the sins of our relations are to be looked upon as the judgments of God upon us. His children, tho' they keep honest, yet shall not keep alive; his *sons and his daughters shall fall by the sword* of war, and he himself shall live to see it. He had *trained them up* in iniquity, and therefore God will *cut them off* in it. (2.) He shall be stripped of all his estate, it shall fall into the hand of the enemy, and be *divided by line*, by lot among the soldiers. What is ill got will not be long kept. (3.) He shall himself perish in a strange country; not in the *land of Israel*, which had been holiness to the Lord, but in a *polluted land*, in a heathen country, the fittest place for such a heathen to end his days in, that hated and silenced God's prophets, and contributed so much to the *polluting* of his own land with idolatry.

2. Notwithstanding the opposition he gave to Amos, God will bring ruin upon the land and nation; he was accused for saying, *Israel shall be led away captive*, *ver. 11.* but he stands to it, and repeats it; for the unbelief of man shall not make the word of God of none effect: the *burthen of the word of the Lord* may be *striven with*, but it cannot be *shaken off*; let Amaziah rage, and fret, and say what he will to the contrary, *Israel shall surely go into captivity forth of his land*. Note, It is to no purpose to contend with the judgments of God, for when God judgeth he will overcome. Stopping the mouths of God's ministers will not stop the progress of God's word, for it shall not return void.

C H A P. VIII.

Sinful times are here attended with sorrowful times, so necessary is the connexion between them; it is threatened here again and again that the laughter shall be turned into mourning. (1.) By the vision of a basket of summer fruit is signified the hastening on of the ruin threatened, *ver. 1—3.* and that shall change their note. (2.) Oppressors are here called to an account for their abusing of the poor, and their destruction is foretold, which will set them on mourning, *ver. 4—10.* (3.) A famine of the word of God is here made the punishment of a people that go a whoring after other gods, *ver. 11—14:* yet for this, which is the most mournful judgment of all, they are not here brought in mourning.

1. **T**HUS hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me, and behold, a basket of summer-fruit.
2. And he said, Amos, what seeest thou, and I said,

A basket of summer-fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel, I will not again pass by them any more. 3. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: *there shall be many dead bodies in every place, they shall cast them forth with silence.*

The great reason why sinners defer their repentance *de die in diem* is, because they think God thus defers his judgments, and there is no song wherewith they so effectually sing themselves asleep as that, *My Lord delays his coming*; and therefore God, by his prophets, frequently represents to Israel the day of his wrath not only as just and certain, but as *very near*, and hastening on apace; so he doth in these verses.

1. The approach of the threatened ruin is represented by a basket of summer-fruit which Amos saw in vision; for the Lord shewed it him, *ver. 1.* and obliged him to take notice of it, *ver. 2.* *Amos, What seeest thou?* Note, It concerns us to enquire, whether we do indeed see that which God has been pleased to shew us, and hear what he has been pleased to say to us; for many a thing God speaks, God shews *once, yea twice*, and men perceive it not. Are we in the midst of the visions of the Almighty, let us consider what we see. He saw a basket of summer-fruit gathered, and ready to be eaten; which signified, (1.) That they were ripe for destruction, rotten ripe, and it was time for God to put in the sickle of his judgments, and to cut them off; nay, the thing was in effect done already, and they lay ready to be eaten up. (2.) That the year of God's patience was drawing towards a conclusion; it was autumn with them, and their year would quickly have its period in a dismal winter. (3.) Those we call summer-fruits, that will not keep till winter, but must be used presently; an emblem of this people that had nothing solid or consistent in them.

2. The intent and meaning of this vision is no more but this, It signifies, that *the end is come upon my people Israel*. The word that signifies *the end* is *kätz*, which is of near affinity with *kitz*, the word used for summer-fruit. God had long spared them, and bore with them, but now his patience is tired out: they are indeed *his people Israel*, but *their end*, that latter end they had been so often minded of, but had so long forgotten, is now come. Note, If sinners do not make an end of sin, God will make an end of them, yea, tho' they be *his people Israel*. What was said, *chap. vii. 8.* is here repeated as God's determined resolution, *I will not again pass by them any more*, they shall not be connived at as they have been, nor the judgment coming turned away.

3. The consequent of this shall be an universal desolation, *ver. 3.* When the end is come, sorrow and death shall ride in triumph, they use to go together, and shall at length go away together, when in heaven there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, *Rev. xxi. 4.* But here in a sinful world, in a sinful nation, (1.) Sorrow reigns; reigns to that degree, that the songs of the temple shall be howlings: the songs of God's temple at Jerusalem, or rather of their idol temples, where they used when, in honour of the golden calves, they had eaten and drunk to rise up to play. They were, perhaps, wanton, profane songs, and it is certain, sooner or later, those will be turned into howlings. Or if they had a sound and shew of piety and religion, yet not coming from the heart, nor being sung to the glory of God, he valued them not, but would justly turn them into howlings. Note, Mourning will follow sinful mirth, yea and sacred mirth too, if it be not sincere. And when God's judgments are abroad they will soon turn the greatest joy into the greatest heaviness; the temple songs that used to sound so pleasant, not only into sighs and groans, but into loud howlings that sound so dismal. They shall come to the temple, and finding that in ruins, there they shall howl most bitterly. (2.) Death reigns, reigns to that degree, that there shall be dead bodies, many dead bodies, in every place, (*Psal. cx. 6.*) slain by sword or pestilence; so many that the survivors shall not bury them with the usual pomp and solemnity of funerals, they shall not so much as have the bell tolled, but they shall cast them forth with silence; shall bury them in the dead of the night, and charge all about them to be silent, and to take no notice of it; either because they have not wherewithal to bear the charges of a funeral, or because the killing disease being infectious none will come near them; or for fear the enemy should be provoked if they should be known to lament their slain. Or, they shall charge themselves, and one another, silently to submit to the hand of God in these desolating judgments, and not to repine and quarrel with him. Or, it may be taken not for a patient but a sullen silence; their hearts shall be hardened, and all these judgments shall not extort from them one word of acknowledgment either of God's righteousness, or their own unrighteousness.

4. ¶ Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, 5. Saying, When will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? 6. That we may buy the

the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes ; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat ? 7. The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein ? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood ; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. 9. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. 10. And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation, and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loyns, and baldness upon every head, and I will make it as the mourning of an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day.

God is here contending with proud oppressors, and shewing them (1.) The *heinousness* of the *sin* they were guilty of ; in short, they had the character of the unjust judge, *Luke xviii. 2.* that neither *feared God*, nor *regarded man*.

1. Observe them in their devotions, and you will say, They have no reverence for God. As bad as they are, they do indeed keep up a shew and form of godliness, they observe the *sabbath*, and the *new moon*, they put some difference between those days and other days, but they were soon weary of them, and had no affection at all to them, but their hearts were wholly set upon the world and the things of it. It is a sad character which this gives of them, that they said, *when will the sabbath be gone that we may sell corn ?* Yet it is still the character of many that are called Christians. (1.) They were sick of sabbath-days ; When will they be gone ? They were weary of the *restraints* of the *sabbaths* and the *new-moons*, and therefore wished them over because they might *do no servile work therein*. They were weary of the *work* and *business* of the *sabbaths* and *new-moons*, snuffed at it, *Mal. i. 13.* and were as *Doeg*, detained before the Lord, *1 Sam. xxi. 7.* they would rather have been any where else than about God's altars. Note, Sabbath-days and sabbath-work is a burthen to carnal hearts, that are always afraid of doing too much for God and eternity. Can we spend our time better than in communion with God ? and how much time do we spend pleasantly with the world ? Will not the sabbath be gone before we have done the work of it, and reaped the gains of it, why then should we be in such haste to part with it ? (2.) They were fond of market-days ; they longed to be *selling corn*, and *setting forth wheat*. When they were employed in religious services they were thinking of their marketings, their hearts *went after their covetousness*, *Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* and thus made my Father's house a house of merchandise, nay, a den of thieves. Therefore they were weary of holy duties, because their worldly business stood still that while ; in which they were as in their element, but in God's sanctuary, as a fish upon dry ground. Note, Those are strangers to God, and enemies to themselves, that love market-days better than sabbath-days, that would rather be selling corn than worshipping God.

2. Observe them in their conversations, and you will see they have no regard to man ; and this commonly follows upon the former, those that have lost the favour of piety will not long retain the sense of common honesty. These here neither *do justly*, nor *love mercy*.

1. They cheat those they deal with. When they *sell their corn* they impose upon the buyer, both in giving out the goods, and in receiving the money for them. They *measure* him the corn by their own measure, and pretend to give him what he agreed for, but they *make the ephah small* : The measure is scanty, and not statute-measure, and so they wrong him that way ; when they receive his money, they must weigh it in their own scales, by their own weights, and their *shekel* they weigh by is above standard, they *make the shekel great*, so that the money being found too light must have more added to it ; and so they cheat that way too, and this under colour and pretence of exactness in doing justice. By such wicked practices as these men shew such a greediness of the world, such a love of themselves, such a contempt of mankind in general, and of the particular persons they deal with, and of the sacred laws of justice, as speaks them to have in their hearts neither the fear nor love of that God who hath so plainly said, *That false weights and balances are an abomination to him*. Another instance of their fraudulent dealing is, That they *sell the refuse of the wheat*, and taking advantage of their neighbours ignorance or necessity make them take it at the same price at which they sell the *finest of the wheat*.

2. They are barbarous and unmerciful to the poor, they *swallow up the needy*, and *make the poor of the land to fail*. (1.) They valued themselves so much by their wealth, that they looked upon all that were poor with the highest contempt imaginable, they hated them, could not endure them, but abandoned them ; and therefore did what they could to make them cease ; not by relieving them to make them cease to be poor, but by banishing and destroying them to make them cease to be, or at least to be in *their land*. But he who thus *reproacheth the poor*, *despiseth his Maker*, in whose hands *rich and poor meet together*. (2.) They were so

eager to increase their wealth, and make it more that they *robbed* the poor to *enrich* themselves ; and therefore they fastened upon the poor to *make a prey* of them, because they were not able to right themselves, nor to resist and revenge the violence of their oppressors. Those riches that are got by the ruin of the poor will bring ruin on those that get them. They swallowed up the poor by making them hard bargains, and cheating them in those bargains ; for therefore they *falsify the balances by deceit*, not only that they may *enrich themselves*, may have money at command, and so may have every thing else (as they think) at command too ; but that they may *impoverish* those about them, and bring them so low that they may force them to become slaves to them, and so having drained them of every thing else, they may have their labour for nothing, or next nothing : thus *they buy the poor for silver*, they bring them and their *children into bondage*, because they have not wherewithal to pay for the *corn* they have bought ; see *Neh. v. 2, 3, 4, 5.* And there were so many that were reduced to this extremity that the price was very low ; and the oppressors had beat it down so, that you might buy a poor man to be your slave for a *pair of shoes*. Property was first invaded, and then liberty : it is the method of oppressors first to make men beggars, and then make them their vassals. Thus is the dignity of the human nature lost in the misery of those that are trampled on, and the tenderness of it in the sin of those that trample on them.

2. Observe the grievousness of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them for this sin. When the poor are injured, they will *cry unto God*, and he will hear their cry, and reckon with those that are injurious to them, for they being his receivers, he takes the wrongs done to them as done to himself, *Exod. xxii. 23, 24.*

1. God will remember their sin against them. *He hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob*, ver. 7. by himself, for he can swear by no greater, and who but He is the *glory* and *magnificence* of Jacob ? He hath sworn by those tokens of his presence with them, and his favour to them, which they had profaned and abused, and had done what they could to make them detestable to him, for he is said, *chap. vi. 8.* to *abhor the excellency of Jacob*. He swears *in his wrath*, swears by his own name, that name which was so well known, and was so great in Israel : he swears, *surely I will never forget any of their works* ; but upon all occasions they shall be remembered against them, for more is implied than is expressed. *I will never forget them*, is as much as to say, *I will never forgive them*, and then it speaks the case of these unjust, unmerciful men to be miserable indeed, eternally miserable ; wo, and a thousand woes, to that man that is cut off by an oath of God from all benefit by pardoning mercy ; and those have reason to fear judgment without mercy that have *shewed no mercy*.

2. He will bring utter ruin and confusion upon them. It is here described largely, and in a great variety of emphatical expressions, that, if possible, they might be frightened into a sincere repentance and reformation.

1. There shall be an universal terror and consternation. *Shall not the land tremble for this ?* ver. 8. *this land*, out of which you thought to have driven the poor ? *Shall not every one mourn that dwelleth therein ?* certainly they shall. Note, Those that will not tremble and mourn as they ought, for national sins, shall be made to tremble and mourn for national judgments ; those that look unconcerned upon the sins of the oppressors, which should make them *tremble*, and upon the miseries of the oppressed which should make them *mourn* ; God will find out a way to make them *tremble* at the fury of those that oppress them, and *mourn* for their own losses and sufferings by it.

2. There shall be an universal deluge and desolation ; when God comes forth against them, the waters of trouble and calamity shall *rise up wholly as a flood*, that swells when it is dammed up, and soon overflows its banks. Every thing shall make against them ; that with which they thought to check the progress of God's judgments, shall but make them rise the higher. Judgments shall force their way, as the *breaking forth of waters*. The whole land shall be *cast out and drowned*, and laid under water, as the land of Egypt is every year by the overflowing of its river Nile. Or, the expressions may allude to some former judgments of God ; their ruin shall *rise up wholly as a flood*, as Noah's flood, which overwhelmed the whole world, so shall this the whole land ; and the land shall be *cast out and drowned*, as by the *flood of Egypt*, i. e. as Pharaoh and his Egyptians were buried in the Red-sea, which was to them the *flood of Egypt* ; both which judgments, as this here threatened, were the punishment of *violence* and *oppression*, which the Lord is the avenger of.

3. It shall surprize them, and come upon them when they little think of it, ver. 9. *I will cause the sun to go down at noon*, when it is in its full strength and lustre ; at their *noon*, when they promise themselves a long afternoon, and think they have at least half a day good before them. The *earth* shall be *darkened in the clear day* ; when every thing looks pleasant and hopeful. Thus *uncertain* are all our creature-comforts and enjoyments, even life itself ; the highest degree of health and prosperity, often proves the next degree to sickness and adversity ; Job's *sun went down at noon* ; many are taken away in the midst of their days, and their *sun goes down at noon* ; in the midst of life we are in death. Thus *terrible* are the judgments of God to those that sleep

sleep in security; they are to them as the sun's going down at noon; the less they are expected, the more confounding they are: when they cry peace and safety, then sudden destruction comes; comes as a snare, Luke xxi. 35.

4. It shall change their note, and mar all their mirth; ver. 10. *I will turn your feasts into mourning, as ver. 3. the songs of the temple into howlings.* Note, The end of the sinner's mirth and jollity is heaviness. As to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness, which gives them the oil of joy for mourning, so on the wicked there falls darkness in the midst of light, which turns their laughter into mourning, their joy into heaviness. So great, so general, shall the desolation be, that sackcloth shall be brought upon all loins, and baldness upon every head, instead of the well-set hair, and the rich garments they used to wear. The mourning at that day shall be as mourning for an only son, which speaks the most bitter and lasting lamentation. But are there no hopes that when things are at the worst they will mend? and that at evening time it will yet be light? No even the end thereof shall be as a bitter day; a day of bitter mourning; the state of impenitent sinners grows worse and worse; and the last of all will be the worst of all; *This shall ye have at my hand, ye shall lie down in sorrow.*

11. ¶ Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD, 12. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it. 13. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. 14. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth, and the manner of Beer-sheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

In these verses is threatened,

1. A general judgment of spiritual famine coming upon the whole land; a famine of the word of God; the failing of oracles, and the scarcity of good preaching. This is spoken of as a thing at some distance, *the days come*, they will come hereafter, when another kind of darkness shall come upon that land of light. When Amos prophesied, and for a considerable time after there was great plenty of prophets, abundant opportunities of hearing the word of God, in season and out of season, they had precept upon precept, and line upon line; prophecy was their daily bread; and, it is likely, they surfeited upon it, as Israel on the manna, and therefore God threatens, that hereafter he will deprive them of this privilege. Probably in the land of Israel there were not so many prophets, about the time that their destruction came upon them, as there were in the land of Judah; and when the ten tribes went into captivity, they saw not their signs; there were no more any prophets, none to shew them how long, Psal. lxxiv. 9. The Jewish church, after Malachi, had no prophets for many ages; and some think this threatening looks further yet, to the blindness which is in part happened to Israel, in the days of the Messiah, and the veil that is on the heart of the unbelieving Jews. They reject the gospel, and the ministers of it that God doth send to them, and covet to have prophets of their own, as their fathers had; but they shall have none; the kingdom of God being taken from them and given to another people. Observe here,

(1.) What the judgment itself is that is threatened. It is a famine, a scarcity, not of bread and water, which are the necessary supports of the body, and the want of which is very grievous; but a much sorer judgment than that, even a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. There shall be no congregations for ministers to preach to, nor any ministers to preach; nor any instructions and abilities given to those that do set up for preachers, to enable them for their work. The word of the Lord shall be precious and scarce, there shall be no vision; 1 Sam. iii. 1. They shall have the written word, bibles to read, but no ministers to explain and apply it to them; the water in the well, but nothing to draw. It is a gracious promise, Isa. xxx. 20. that tho' they have a scarcity of bread, they shall have plenty of the means of grace, God will give them the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, but their eyes shall see their teachers, and it was a common saying among the Puritans, that brown bread, and the gospel, is good fare; but it is here a threatening, that on the contrary they should have plenty enough of bread and water, and yet their teachers should be removed. Now, (1.) This was the departure of a great part of their glory from their land. This made their nation great and high, that to them were committed the oracles of God, but when those were taken from them, their beauty was stained, and their honour laid in the dust. (2.) This was a token of God's highest displeasure against them; surely he was angry indeed with them, when he would no more speak to them, as he had done, and had abandoned them to ruin, when he would no more afford them the means of bringing them to repentance. (3.) This made all the other calamities that were

upon them truly melancholy, that they had no prophets to instruct and comfort them from the word of God, nor to give them any hopeful prospect. We should say at any time, and will say in a time of trouble, that a famine of the word of God is of all other the worst famine, the heaviest judgment.

(2.) What will be the effect of this, ver. 12. *They shall wander from sea to sea*, from the sea of Tiberias to the great-sea, from one border of the country to another, to see if God will send them prophets either by sea or land from other countries, since they have none among themselves, they shall go from the north to the east, when they are disappointed in one place, they shall try another, and shall run to and fro, as men at a loss, and in a hot pursuit to seek the word of the Lord, to enquire if there be any prophets, any prophecy, any message from God, but they shall not find it. (1.) Tho' to many this is no affliction at all, yet some will be very sensible of it as a great grievance, and will gladly travel far to hear a good sermon, but they shall sensibly feel the loss of those mercies which others have foolishly sinned away. (2.) Even those that slighted prophets when they had them, shall wish for them as Saul did for Samuel, when they are deprived of them: many never know the worth of mercies till they feel the want of them. Or, it may be meant thus, tho' they should thus wander from sea to sea in quest of the word of God, yet they shall not find it. Note, The means of grace are moveable things; and the candlestick when we think it stands most firm, yet may be removed out of its place: Rev. ii. 5. and those that now slight the days of the son of man may wish in vain to see them. And in the day of this famine the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst, ver. 13. those who one would think could well enough have born the toil, yet shall sink under it. The Jewish churches, and the masters of their synagogues some take to be meant by the virgins, and the young men; these shall lose the word of the Lord, and the benefit of divine revelation, and shall faint away for want of it, shall lose all their strength and beauty. Those that trust in their own merit and righteousness, and think they have no need of Christ, others take to be meant by the fair virgins and the choice young men, those shall faint for thirst, when those that hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ shall be abundantly satisfied and filled.

2. The particular destruction of those that were ringleaders in idolatry, ver. 14. Observe, (1.) The sin they are charged with. They swear by the sin of Samaria, i. e. by the god of Samaria; the idol that was worshipped at Bethel, not far off from Samaria; thus did they glory in their shame, and swear by that as their god, which was their iniquity; thinking that could help them which would certainly ruin them; and giving the highest honour to that which they should have looked upon with the utmost abhorrence and detestation. They say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth, that was the other golden-calf; a dumb dead idol, and yet is caressed and complimented, as if it had been the living and true God. They say, the manner, or way, of Beer-sheba liveth; they swear by the religion of Beer-sheba, the way and manner of worship used there, which they looked upon as sacred, and therefore swear by it, and appealed to it as a judge of controversy. Thus the Papists swear by the mass, as the manner of Beer-sheba. (2.) The destruction they are threatened with; those who thus give that honour to idols, which is due to God alone, will find the God they affront is thereby made their enemy, so that they shall fall, and the gods they serve cannot stand their friends, so that they shall never rise again. They will find that God is jealous, and will resent the indignity done him; and that he will be victorious, and it is to no purpose to contend with him.

CHAP. IX.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Judgments threatened, which the sinners shall not escape, ver. 1—4. which an almighty power shall inflict, ver. 5, 6. which the people of Israel have deserved as a sinful people, ver. 7, 8. and yet it shall not be the utter ruin of their nation, ver. 8. for a remnant of good people shall escape, ver. 9. But the wicked ones shall perish, ver. 10. (2.) Mercy promised which was to be bestowed in the latter days, ver. 11—15. as appears by the application of it to the days of the Messiah, Acts xv. 16. And with those comfortable promises, after all the foregoing rebukes and threatenings, the book concludes.

1. I saw the LORD standing upon the altar, and he said, Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head all of them; and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that fleeth of them, shall not flee away; and he that escapeth of them, shall not be delivered. 2. Though they

they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them ; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down : 3. And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence ; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them : 4. And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them : and I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. 5. And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn, and it shall rise up wholly like a flood, and shall be drowned as by the flood of Egypt. 6. It is he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth, he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth : the LORD is his name. 7. Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel ? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt ? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Assyrians from Kir ? 8. Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth ; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the LORD. 9. For lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. 10. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

We have here the justice of God passing sentence upon a provoking people ; and observe,

1. With what solemnity the sentence is passed. The prophet saw in vision the Lord standing upon the altar, ver. 1. the altar of burnt-offerings, for the Lord hath a sacrifice, and multitudes must fall as victims to his justice. He is removed from the mercy-seat between the cherubims, and stands upon the altar, the judgment-seat, on which the fire of God used to fall to devour the sacrifices. He stands upon the altar to shew that the ground of his controversy with this people, was their profanation of his holy things ; here he stands to avenge the quarrel of his altar ; as also to signify, that the sin of the house of Israel, like that of the house of Eli, shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever, 1 Sam. iii. 14. He stands on the altar to prohibit sacrifice. Now the order given is, *Smite the lintel of the door of the temple, the chapter, smite it with such a blow that the posts may shake, and cut them, wound them in the head, all of them : break down the door of God's house, or of the courts of his house, in token of this that he is going out from it, and forsaking it, and then all judgments are breaking in upon it.* Or, it signifies the destruction of those in the first place, that should be as the door-posts to the nation, for its defence, so as that they being broken down it becomes as a city without gates and bars. Smite the king, who is as the lintel of the door, that the princes, who are as the posts may shake ; cut them in the head, cleave them down, all of them, as wood for the fire ; and I will slay the last of them, the posterity of them, them and their families, or the least of them, them and all that are employed under them : or, I will slay them all, them and all that remain of them, till it comes to the last man ; the slaughter shall be general. There is no living for those of whom God hath said I will slay them ; no standing before his sword.

2. What effectual care is taken that none shall escape the execution of this sentence. This is enlarged upon here, and is intended for warning to all that provoke the Lord to jealousy : let sinners read it and tremble, as there is no fighting it out with God, so there is no fleeing from him. His judgments when they come with commission, as they will overpower the strongest that think to out-face them, so they will overtake the swiftest that think to out-run them, ver. 1. Those of them that flee, and take to their heels, they shall soon be out of breath, and shall not flee away, out of the reach of danger ; for as sometimes the wicked flees when none pursues, so he cannot flee away when God pursues, tho' he would fain flee out of his hand. Nay, he that escapeth of them, that thinks he has gained his point, yet he shall not be delivered ; evil pursues sinners, and will arrest them.

This is here enlarged upon by shewing, that wherever sinners flee for shelter from God's justice, it will overtake them, and the shelter will prove but a refuge of lies ; what David saith of the ubiquity of God's presence, Psal. cxxxix. 7, 8, 9. is here said of the extent of God's power and justice. (1.) Hell itself, tho' it has its name in English from its being *hilled*, or *covered over*, or *bidden*, cannot hide them, ver. 2. Tho' they dig into hell, into the center of the earth, or the darkest recesses of it, yet thence shall my hand take them, and bring them forth to be made publick monuments of divine justice.

The grave is a *hiding place* to the righteous from the malice of the world, Job iii. 17. but it shall be no *hiding place* to the wicked from the justice of God ; from thence God's hand shall take them, when they shall rise in the great day to *everlasting shame and contempt*. (2.) Heaven, tho' it has its name from being *heaved* or *lifted up*, shall not put them out of the reach of God's judgments ; as *hell cannot hide them ; so heaven will not, tho' they climb up to heaven*, in their own conceit, yet *thence will I bring them down* ; those whom God brings to heaven by his grace shall never be brought down ; but those who climb thither themselves, by their own presumption and confidence in themselves will be brought down, and filled with shame. (3.) The top of Carmel, one of the highest parts of the dust of the world in that country shall not protect them ; *tho' they hide themselves there, where they imagine no body will look for them, I will search and take them out thence* ; neither the thickest bushes, nor the darkest caves, in the top of Carmel, will serve to hide them. (4.) The bottom of the sea shall not serve to conceal them ; tho' they think to hide themselves there, even there the judgments of God shall find them out, and lay hold on them : *thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them ; the crooked serpent, even the dragon that is in the sea*, Isa. xxvii. 1. They shall find their plague and death there, where they hope to find shelter and protection ; *diving will stand them in no more stead than climbing*. (5.) Remote countries will not befriend them, nor shall lesser judgments excuse them from greater, ver. 4. *Tho' they go into captivity before their enemies, who carry them to places at a great distance, and mingle them with their own people, among whom they seem to be lost, yet that shall not serve their turn, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them ; the sword of the enemy, or one another's sword ; when God judgeth he will overcome.* And that which binds on all this, and makes their escape impossible, and their ruin inevitable is, that God will set his eyes upon them for evil and not for good : his eyes are in every place, are upon all men, and upon all the ways of men, upon some for good to shew himself strong on their behalf, but upon others for evil, to take notice of their sins, Job xiii. 27. and take all opportunities of punishing them for their sins. Their case is truly miserable, that have the providence of God, and all the dispensations of it against them, working for their hurt.

3. What a great and mighty God he is that passeth this sentence upon them, and will take the executing of it into his own hands. Threatnings are more or less formidable, according to the power of him that threatens. We laugh at *impotent* wrath, but the wrath of God is not so ; it is *omnipotent* wrath, who knows the power of it ? What he had before said he would do, Chap. viii. 8. is here repeated, that he would make the land melt and tremble, and all that dwell therein mourn, that the judgment should rise up wholly like a flood, and the country should be drowned, and laid under water, as by the flood of Egypt, ver. 5. But is he able to make his words good ? Yes, certainly he is, he doth but touch the land, and it melteth, touch the mountains and they smoke ; he can do it with the greatest ease, for (1.) He is the Lord God of hosts, that undertakes to do it ; the God that has all power in his hand, and all creatures at his beck, that having made them all, and given them their several capacities, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and all their powers. Very miserable is the case of those that have the Lord God of hosts against them, for they have hosts against them, the whole creation at war with them. (2.) He is the Creator and Governor of the upper world : It is he that buildeth his stories in the heavens ; the celestial orbs, or spheres, one over another as so many stories in a high and stately palace, are his, for he built them at first, when he said, *Let there be a firmament, and he made the firmament, and he buildeth them still, is continually building them*, not that they need repair, but by his providence he still upholdeth them : his power is the pillars of heaven, by which it is born up. Now he that hath the command of those stories is certainly to be feared, for from thence, as from a castle, he can fire upon his enemies, or cast upon them great hailstones, as on the Canaanites, or make the stars in their courses, the furniture of those stories, to fight against them as against Sifera. (3.) He has the conduct and command of this lower world too, in which we dwell ; the terraqueous globe, both earth and sea, so that which way soever his enemies think to make their escape he will meet them, or to make opposition, he will match them. Do they think to make a land-fight of it ? He hath founded his troop in the earth, his troop of guards which he has at command, and makes use of for the protection of his subjects, and the punishment of his enemies. All the creatures on earth make one bundle, as the margin reads it, one bundle of arrows, out of which he takes what he pleaseth to discharge against the persecutors, Psal. vii. 3. They are all one army, one body, so closely are they connected, and so harmoniously and so much in concert do they act for the accomplishing of their Creator's purposes. Do they think to make a sea-fight of it ? he will be too hard for them there, for he has the waters of the sea at command, even its waves, the most tumultuous, rebellious waters do obey him. He calls for the waters of the sea in the course of his common providence, causeth vapours to ascend out of it, and poureth them out in showers, the small rain,

rain, and the great rain of his strength, *upon the face of the earth*; this was mentioned before as a reason why we should seek the Lord, chap. v. 8. and make him our friend, as it is here made a reason why we should fear him, and dread having him our enemy.

4. How justly God passeth this sentence upon the people of Israel; He doth not destroy them by an act of sovereignty, but by an act of righteousness; for, *ver. 8.* it is a *sinful kingdom*, and the eyes of the Lord are upon it discovering it to be so, he sees the great sinfulness of it, and therefore he will *destroy it from off the face of the earth*. Note, when those kingdoms that in name and profession were *holy kingdoms*, and *kingdoms of priests*, as Israel was, become *sinful kingdoms*, no other can be expected, but that they should be cut off and abandoned. Let sinful kingdoms, and sinful families, and sinful persons too, see the eyes of the Lord upon them, observing all their wickedness, and reserving the notice of it for the day of reckoning and recompence. This being a *sinful kingdom*, see how light God makes of it, *ver. 7.* (1.) Of the relation wherein he stood to it. *Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel?* A sad change! Children of Israel become as children of the Ethiopians? 1. They were so in themselves, that was their sin; it is a thing to be greatly lamented, that the children of Israel often become as children of the Ethiopians; the children of godly parents degenerate, and become the reverse of those that went before them: Those that were well educated and trained up in the knowledge and fear of God, and set out well, and promised fair, throw off their profession, and become as bad as the worst. *How is the gold become dim?* 2. They were so in God's account, and that was their punishment; he valued them no more, tho' they were children of Israel, than if they had been children of the Ethiopians. We read of one in the title of *Psal. vii.* that was Cush, (an Ethiopian, so some understand it) and yet a Benjamite. Those that by birth and profession are children of Israel, if they degenerate and become wicked and vile, are to God no more than children of the Ethiopians. This is an intimation of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews in the days of the Messiah; because they embraced not the doctrine of Christ, the kingdom of God was taken from them, they were unchurched, and cast out of covenant, became as children of the Ethiopians, and are so to this day. And it is true of those that are called Christians, but do not live up to their name and profession, that rest in the form of piety, but live under the power of reigning iniquity, that they are to God as children of the Ethiopians; he rejects them and their services. (2.) See how light he makes of the favours he had conferred upon them, they thought he would not, he could not, cast them off, and put them upon a level with other nations, because he had done that for them which he had not done for other nations, whereby they thought he was bound to them, so as never to leave them; No, saith he, The favours shewed you are not so distinguishing as you think they are; *Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt?* It is true, I have; but I have also brought the Philistines from Caphtor, or Cappadocia, where they were either natives, or captives, or both; they are called the remnant of the country of Caphtor, *Jer. xlvii. 4.* and the Philistines are joined with the Caphtorim, *Gen. x. 4.* In like manner the Syrians were brought up from Kir, when they had been carried away thither, *2 Kings xvi. 19.* Note, If God's Israel lose the peculiarity of their holiness, they lose the peculiarity of their privileges; and what was designed as a favour of special grace shall be set in another light, shall have its property altered, and shall become but an act of common providence; if professors liken themselves to the world, God will level them with the world. And if we live not up to the obligation of God's mercies, we forfeit the honour and comfort of them.

5. How graciously God will separate between the precious and the vile in the day of retribution. Though the wicked Israelites shall be as the wicked Ethiopians, and their being called Israelites shall stand them in no stead, yet the pious Israelites shall not be as the wicked ones; no, the Judge of all the earth will do right, more right than to slay the righteous with the wicked, *Gen. xviii. 25.* His eyes are upon the sinful kingdom, to spy out those in it that preserve their integrity, and swim against the stream: Who sigh and cry for the abominations of their land, and they shall be marked for preservation; so that the destruction shall not be total, *I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob*, not ruin them by wholesale, and in the gross, good and bad together, but I will distinguish, as becomes a righteous judge. The house of Israel shall be sifted as corn is sifted, they shall be greatly hurried, and shaken, and tossed, but still in the hands of God, in both his hands, as the sieve in the hands of him that sifteth, *ver. 9.* *I will sift the house of Israel among all nations*, wherever they are shaken and scattered, God will have his eye upon them, and will take care to separate between the corn and chaff, which was the thing he designed in sifting them. (1.) The righteous ones among them that are as the solid wheat, shall none of them perish; they shall be delivered either from or through the common calamities of the kingdom; not the least grain shall fall on the earth, so as to be lost and forgotten; not the least stone, so the word is, for the good corn is weighty as a stone, in comparison with that which we call light corn. Note, Whatever shakings there may be in the world, God doth and

will effectually provide that none that are truly his shall be truly miserable. (2.) The wicked ones among them that are hardened in their sins, shall all of them perish, *ver. 10.* See what a height of impiety they are come to, *They say, the evil shall not overtake and prevent us.* They think they are innocent and do not deserve punishment: or, that the profession they make of relation to God will be their exemption and security from punishment: or, that they shall be able to make their part good against the judgments of God, that they shall flee so swiftly from them that they shall not overtake them, or guard so carefully against them, that they shall not prevent or surprize them. Note, Hope of impunity is the deceitful refuge of the impenitent. But see what it will come to at last; *all the sinners that thus flatter themselves, and affront God, shall die by the sword*, the sword of war, which to them shall be the sword of divine vengeance; yea, tho' they be the sinners of my people; for their profession shall not be their protection. Note, Evil is often nearest those that put it at the greatest distance from them.

11. ¶ In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof, and I will raise up his ruines, and I will build it as in the days of old: 12. That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doth this. 13. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plow-men shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.

To him to whom all the prophets bare witness, this prophet here in the close bears his testimony; and speaks of that day, those days that shall come in which God will do great things for his church, by the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah, for the rejecting of which the rejection of the Jews was foretold in the foregoing verses. The promise here is said to agree to the planting of the Christian church, and in that to be fulfilled, *Acts xv. 15, 16, 17.*

1. It is promised that in the Messiah the kingdom of David shall be restored, *ver. 11.* the tabernacle of David it is called, i. e. his house and family, which, tho' great and fixed, yet in comparison with the kingdom of heaven was mean and moveable as a tabernacle. The church militant, in its present state, dwelling as in *shepherds tents to feed*, as in *soldiers tents to fight*, is the tabernacle of David. God's tabernacle is called the tabernacle of David, because David desired and chose to dwell in God's tabernacle for ever, *Psal. lxi. 4.* Now, (1.) These tabernacles were fallen, and gone to decay, the royal family was so impoverished, its power abridged, its honour stained and laid in the dust; for many of that race degenerated, and in the captivity it lost the imperial dignity; sore breaches were made upon it, and at length it was laid in ruins. So it was with the church of the Jews, in the latter days of it, its glory was departed, it was like a tabernacle broken down, and brought to ruin, in respect, both of purity and prosperity. (2.) By Jesus Christ these tabernacles were raised and re-built. In him God's covenant with David had its accomplishment, and the glory of that house; which was not only sullied, but quite sunk, revived again, the breaches of it were closed, and its ruins raised up, as in the days of old; nay, the spiritual glory of the family of Christ far exceeded the temporal glory of the family of David, when it was in its height. In him also God's covenant with Israel had its accomplishment, and in the gospel church the tabernacle of God was set up among men again, and raised up out of the ruins of the Jewish state. This is quoted in the first council at Jerusalem as referring to the calling in of the Gentiles, and God's taking out of them a people for his name. Note, While the world stands God will have a church in it, and if it be fallen down in one place, and among one people, it shall be raised up elsewhere.

2. It is promised that that kingdom shall be enlarged, and the territories of it shall extend far, by the accession of many countries to it, *ver. 12.* That the house of David may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, i. e. That Christ may have them given him for his inheritance, even the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, *Psal. ii. 8.* Those that had been strangers and enemies, shall become willing, faithful, subjects to the Son of David, shall be added to the church, or those of them that are called by my name, saith the Lord, i. e. that belong to the election of grace; and are ordained to eternal life, *Acts xiii. 48.* for it is true of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, that

that the election hath obtained, and the rest were blinded, Rom. xi. 7. Christ died to gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad, here said to be those that were called by his name; the promise is to all that were afar off, even as many of them as the Lord our God shall call, Acts ii. 39. St James expounds this as a promise, *That the residue of men should seek after the Lord, even all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called.* But may the promise be depended upon? Yes, the Lord saith this, who doth this; who can do it, who hath determined to do it, the power of whose grace is engaged for the doing of it; and with whom saying and doing are not two things, as they are with us.

3. That in the kingdom of the Messiah, there shall be great plenty, and abundance of all good things, that the country doth produce, ver. 13. *The ploughman shall overtake the reaper, i. e. There shall be such a plentiful harvest every year, and so much corn to be gathered in, that it shall last all summer, even till autumn, when it is time to begin to plow again; and in like manner the vintage shall continue till seed-time; and there shall be such abundance of grapes, that even the mountains shall drop new wine into the vessels of the grape-gatherers, and the hills that were dry and barren shall be moistened, and shall melt with the fatness, or the mellowness (as we call it) of the soil.* Compare this with Joel ii. 24. and iii. 18. This must certainly be understood of the abundance of spiritual blessings in heavenly things which all those are and shall be blessed with that are in sincerity added to Christ and his church; they shall be abundantly replenished with the goodness of God's house, with the graces and comforts of his Spirit; they shall have bread, the bread of life, to strengthen their hearts, and the wine of divine consolations to make them glad; meat indeed, and drink indeed; all the benefit that comes to the souls of men from the Word and Spirit of God, these had been long confined to the vineyard of the Jewish church, divine revelation and the power that attended it were to be found only within that inclosure; but in gospel-times, the mountains and hills of the Gentile world shall be enriched with these privileges, by the gospel of Christ preached, and professed, and received in the power of it. When great multitudes were converted to the faith of Christ, and nations were born at once, when the preachers of the gospel were always caused to triumph in the success of their preaching, then the ploughman overtook the reaper; and when the Gentile churches were enriched in all utterance, and in all knowledge, and all manner of spiritual gifts, 1 Cor. i. 5. then the mountains dropped sweet wine.

4. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall be well peopled; as the country shall be replenished, so shall the cities be; there shall be mouths for this meat, ver. 14. Those that were carried captives shall be brought back out of their captivity, their enemies shall not be able to detain them in the land of their captivity, nor shall they themselves incline to settle in it, but the remnant shall return; and shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them, shall form themselves into Christian churches, and set up pure doctrine, worship and discipline among them, according to the gospel charter by which Christ's cities are incorporated; and shall enjoy the benefit and comfort thereof: they shall plant vineyards, and make gardens, tho' the mountains and hills drop wine, and the privileges of the gospel-church are laid in common, yet they shall inclose for themselves, not to monopolize these privileges to the exclusion of others, but to appropriate and improve these privileges in communion with others, and they shall drink the wine, and eat the fruit of their own vineyards and gardens; for they that take pains in religion, as men must do about their vineyards and gardens, shall have both the pleasure and the profit of it. The bringing again of the captivity of God's Israel, which is here promised, may refer to the cancelling of the ceremonial law, which had been long to God's Israel as a yoke of bondage, and the investing of them in the liberty wherewith Christ came to make his church free, Gal. v. 1.

5. That the kingdom of the Messiah shall take such deep rooting in the world, as never to be rooted out of it, ver. 15. *I will plant them upon their land,* God's spiritual Israel shall be planted, by the right hand of God himself, upon the land assigned them, and they shall no more be pulled up out of it, as the old Jewish church was. God will preserve them from throwing themselves out of it by a total apostasy, and will preserve them from being thrown out of it by the malice of their enemies; the church may be corrupted, but shall not quite forsake God, may be persecuted, but shall not quite be forsaken of God, so that the gates of hell, neither with their temptations, nor with their terrors, shall prevail against it. Two things secure the perpetuity of the church; (1.) God's grants to it. It is the land which I have given them, and God will confirm and maintain his own grants. The part he has given to his people, is that good part which shall never be taken from them; he will not revoke his grant, and all the powers of earth and hell shall not invalidate it. (2.) Its interest in him. He is the Lord thy God who has said it, and will make it good: *Thine, O Israel, who shall reign for ever, as thine unto all generations.* And because he lives, the church shall live also.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

Prophecy of O B A D I A H.

This is the shortest of all the books of the Old Testament; the least of those tribes; and yet is not to be passed by; or thought meanly of; for this penny hath Cæsar's image and superscription upon it; it is stamped with a divine authority: there may appear much of God in a short sermon, in a little book; and much good may be done by it; multum in parvo. Mr Norris saith, If angels were to write books we should have few folios: that may be very precious which is not voluminous. This book is intituled, The Vision of Obadiah: Who this Obadiah was doth not appear from any other scripture; some of the antients imagined him to be the same with that Obadiah that was steward of Ahab's household, 1 Kings xviii. 3. and if so, he that hid and fed the prophets, had indeed a prophet's reward, when he was himself made a prophet. But that is a conjecture which has no ground. This Obadiah, it is probable, was of a later date, some think cotemporary with Hosea, Joel, and Amos; others think he lived about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the children so barbarously triumphed in that destruction. However, what he wrote was what he saw; it is his vision; probably, there are much more which he was divinely inspired to speak, but this is all he was inspired to write; and all he writes is concerning Edom. It is a foolish fancy of some of the Jews, that because he prophesies only concerning Edom, he was himself an Edomite by birth, but a proselyte to the Jewish religion: other prophets prophesied against Edom, and some of them seem to have borrowed from him, in their predictions against Edom, as Jer. xlix. 7, &c. Ezek. xxv. 8, &c. out of the mouth of these two or three witnesses every word will be established.

C H A P. I.

This book is wholly concerning Edom; a nation near allied, and near adjoining, to Israel, and yet an enemy to the seed of Jacob, inheriting the enmity of their father Esau to Jacob. Now here we have after the preface, ver. 1. (1.) Threatenings against Edom, (1.) That their pride should be humbled, ver. 2—4. (2.) That their wealth should be plundered, ver. 5—7. (3.) That their wisdom should be insatuated, ver. 8, 9. (4.) That their spiteful carriage towards God's Israel should be avenged, ver. 10—16. (2.) Gracious promises to Israel; that they shall be restored and reformed, and shall be victorious over the Edomites, and become masters of their land, and the lands of other their neighbours, ver. 17—20. And that the kingdom of the Messiah shall be set up, by the bringing in of the great salvation, ver. 21.

1. **T**HE vision of Obadiah. Thus saith the Lord GOD, concerning Edom, We have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent among the heathen, Arise ye, and let us rise up against her in battle. 2. Behold, I have made thee small among the heathen: thou art greatly despised. 3. ¶ The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee: thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground? 4. Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the LORD. 5. If thieves came to thee, if robbers by night (how art thou cut off!) would they not have stolen till they had enough? if the grape-gatherers came to thee, would they not leave some grapes? 6. How are the things of Esau searched out? how are his hid things sought

fought up? 7. All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee *even* to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee: *they that eat thy bread*, have laid a wound under thee: *there is none understanding in him*. 8. Shall I not in that day, saith the LORD, even destroy the wise men out of Edom, and understanding out of the mount of Esau? 9. And thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed, to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter.

Edom is the nation against which this prophecy is levelled, and some think is put for all the enemies of Israel, that shall be brought down first or last; the rabbins by Edom understand Rome, Rome Christian they understand it of, and have an implacable enmity to it as such; but if we understand it of Rome Anti-Christian, we shall find the passages of it applicable enough. And tho' Edom was mortified in the times of the Maccabees, as it had been before by Jehoshaphat, yet its destruction seems to have been typical, as their father Esau's rejection, and to have had further reference to the destruction of the enemies of the gospel-church; for so shall all God's enemies perish; and we find, *Isa. xxxiv. 5.* the sword of the Lord coming down upon Idumea, to signify the general day of God's recompences for the controversy of Zion, *ver. 8.* Some have well observed, that it could not but be a great temptation to the people of Israel, when they saw themselves, who were the children of beloved Jacob, in trouble, and the Edomites the seed of hated Esau, not only prospering, but triumphing over them in their troubles; and therefore God gives them a prospect of the destruction of Edom, which should be total and final, and of a happy issue of their own correction.

Now we may observe here,

1. A declaration of war against Edom, *ver. 1.* *We have heard a rumour*, or rather *an order* from the Lord, the God of hosts, he hath given the word of command, it is his counsel and decree, which can neither be reversed nor resisted, that all that *do mischief* to his people shall certainly *bring mischief* upon themselves; we have heard a *report* that God is raised up out of his holy habitation, and is preparing his throne for judgment; and *an ambassador is sent among the heathen*, a *herald* rather, some minister or messenger of providence, to alarm the nations, or the Lord's prophets who gave each nation its *burthen*: Those whom God employs cry to each other, *arise ye*, stir up yourselves and one another, and let *us rise up against Edom in battle*; the confederate forces under Nebuchadnezzar thus animate themselves, and one another, to make a descent upon that county; *gather ye together and come against her*, so it is in the parallel place, *Jer. xlix. 15.* Note, When God hath bloody work to do among the enemies of his church, he will find out, and fit up, both hands and hearts to do it.

2. A prediction of the success of that war; Edom shall certainly be subdued and spoiled, and brought down, for all her confidences shall fail her, and stand her in no stead, and in like manner shall all the enemies of God's church be disappointed in those things, which they stayed themselves upon.

1. Do they depend upon their grandeur, the figure they make among the nations, their influence upon them, and interest in them? that shall dwindle, *ver. 2.* *Behold I have made thee small among the heathen*, so that none of thy neighbours will court thy friendship, or court an alliance with thee; *thou art greatly despised* among them, and looked upon with contempt as an infatuated and unfaithful nation. And thus, *ver. 3.* *The pride of thine heart has deceived thee*. Note 1. Those that think well of themselves, are apt to fancy that others think well of them too, but when they come to make trial of them they will find themselves mistaken, and thus their *pride deceives* them, and by it *slays* them. 2. God can easily lay those low that have magnified and exalted themselves; and will find out a way to do it, for he *resisteth the proud*; and we often see those *small and greatly despised*, who, when time was, looked very big, and were greatly caressed and admired.

2. Do they depend upon the fortifications of their country, both by nature and art, and glory in the advantages they have thereby? Those also shall deceive them. They *dwelt in the clefts of the rock*, as an eagle in her nest, and their *habitation was high*, not only exalted above their neighbours, which was the matter of their pride, but fortified against their enemies which was the matter of their security, so *high* as to be out of the reach of danger. Now observe, (1.) what Edom saith in the pride of his heart: *Who shall bring me down to the ground?* He speaks with a confidence of his own strength, and a contempt of God's judgments, as if almighty power itself could not over-power him. As for *all his enemies*, even God himself, he *puffeth at them*, *Psal. x. 5.* sets them all at defiance. Their father Esau had *sold his birthright*, and yet they lift up themselves, as if to them had still pertained the *excellency of dignity and power*: Many *forfeit* their privileges, and yet *boast* of them. Because Edom is high and *lifted up*, he imagines none can *bring him down*: Note, Carnal security is a sin that most easily besets men in the day of their pomp, power, and prosperity; and doth as much as any thing both ripen men for ruin, and aggravate it when it comes. (2.) What God saith to

No. lxxv.

this, *ver. 4.* If men will dare to challenge omnipotence their challenge shall be taken up; *Who shall bring me down?* saith Edom, *I will*, saith God; *tho' thou exalt thyself as the eagle*, that soars high, and builds high, nay, *tho' thou set thy nest among the stars*, higher than ever any eagle flew, it is but in thine own imagination, and *thence will I bring thee down*. This we had, *Jer. xlv. 15, 16.* Note, Sinners will certainly be made ashamed of their pride and security; of their pride when it has a fall, and of their security when their confidences fail their expectation.

3. Do they depend upon their wealth and treasure, the abundance of which is looked upon as the sinews of war, is their money their defence? Is that their strong city? it is so but in *their own conceit*, for it shall rather *expose* them than *protect* them; it shall be made a prey to the enemy, and they for the sake of it, *ver. 5, 6.* much to this purpose we had, *Jer. xlix. 9, 10.* only here comes in, in a parenthesis, (*How art thou cut off!*) thou and all thy stores: The prophet *foretels* it, but *laments* it, that the thread of their prosperity was *cut off*; how art thou fallen, and how great is thy fall? *How art thou stupified!* so the Chaldee words it: How senseless art thou under these desolating judgments, as if they were but common strokes; but he shews that it should be an *utter ruin*, not an *usual calamity*; for (1.) It is indeed an *usual calamity* for those that have wealth to have it stolen; and to lose a little out of their *great deal*. *Thieves came to them* (for where the carcase is there will the birds of prey be gathered together) *robbers come by night*, and they *steal till they have enough*, what they have occasion for, what they have a mind of; they steal no more than they think they can carry away; and out of a great stock it is scarce missed: Those that rob orchards, or vineyards, carry off what they think fit, but they *leave some grapes*, some fruit for the owner, who easily bears his loss, perhaps, and soon recruits it; but (2.) It shall not be so with Edom, his wealth shall all be taken away, and nothing shall escape the hands of the destroying army, not that which is most precious and valuable, *ver. 6.* *How are the things of Esau*, the things he sets his heart upon, and placeth his happiness in, his *good things*, his *best things*, how are these things which were so carefully treasured up and concealed, now *searched out* by the enemy, and seized. *How are his hid things*, his hid treasures, plundered, rifled, and *sought up*; his hoards, that had not seen the light of many years, are now a spoil to the enemy. Note, Treasures on earth, tho' never so fast locked up, and never so artfully hidden, yet cannot be so safely laid up, but that thieves may break through and steal; it is therefore our wisdom to *lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven*.

4. Do they depend upon their alliances with neighbouring states and potentates, those also shall fail them, *ver. 7.* *The men of thy confederacy*, all of them, the Ammonites and Moabites, and other thy high allies that were at *peace with thee*, that entered into a league offensive and defensive with thee, that solemnly engaged not only to do thee no hurt, but to do thee all the service they could; they *did eat thy bread*, were magnificently treated and entertained by thee, lived upon thee, their soldiers had free quarter in thy country, and took pay as thine auxiliaries; they have *brought thee even to the border* of thy land; were very respectful to thine ambassadors, and brought them on their way home, even to the utmost limits of their country; they seemed forward to serve thee with their forces when thou hadst occasion for them, and came along with thee *to the border*, till thou wast just ready to engage the invading enemy; but then, (1.) They have *deceived thee*, they flew back and retreated when thou wast in extremity, and proved as a *broken reed*, to the traveller that is *weary*, and as the brooks in summer to the traveller that is *thirsty*; they bear no weight, yield no relief. Nay, (2.) They have *prevailed against thee*, i. e. they were too hard for thee in the treaty, imposed upon thee, and by cheating thee ruined thee; brought thee into danger, and there left thee an easy prey to thine enemy. Note, Those that make flesh their arm, arm it against them: Yet this was not the worst. (3.) They have *laid a wound under thee*, i. e. They have laid that under thee for a stay and support, for a foundation to *rely on*, for a pillow to *repose on*, which will prove a *wound to thee*; not as thorns only, but as swords. If God lay under us the arms of his power and love, these will be firm and easy under us, the God of our covenant will never deceive us; but if we trust to *the men of our confederacy*, and what they will lay under us, it may prove to us a *wound and dishonour*. And observe, the just censure here passed upon Edom for trusting to those who thus plaid tricks with him, *there is no understanding in him*, or else he would never have put it into their power to betray him by putting such a confidence in them. Note, These shew they have no understanding in them, who when they are encouraged to trust in the Creator, put a cheat upon themselves by reposing a confidence in the creature.

5. Do they depend upon the politicks of their counsellors? these shall fail them, *ver. 8.* Edom had been famous for great statesmen, men of learning and experience, that sat at the helm of government, and were masters of all the arts of management; that in all treaties used to out-wit their neighbours; but now the *counsellors* are become *fools*, and the wise God makes them so; *shall I not in that day destroy the wise men out of Edom?* As men they shall fall by the sword in common with others, *Psal. xlix. 10.* and their wisdom shall not secure them; as *wise men* they shall be

infatuated in all their counsels, their best-laid designs shall be baffled, their measures broken, and those very projects, by which they thought to establish themselves and the publick interests shall be the ruin of both. Thus *wisdom perisheth from Teman*, as it is in the parallel place, *Jer. xlix. 7.* This was (1.) The just punishment of their folly in trusting to an arm of flesh; *there is no understanding in them*, ver. 7. They have not sense to trust in a living God, and God of truth, but put confidence in men that are frail, fickle, and false, and therefore God will *destroy their understanding*. Note, God will justly deny those understanding to keep out of the way of danger, that will not use their understanding to keep out of the way of sin. He that will be foolish let him be foolish still. (2.) It was the forerunner of their destruction. A nation is then marked for ruin when God hides the things that belong to its peace from the eyes of those that are intrusted with its counsels. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat.* Job. xiii. 17.

6. Do they depend upon the strength and courage of their soldiers? They are not only able-bodied, but men of spirit and courage, that can face an enemy, and stand their ground; but now, ver. 9. *Thy mighty men, O Teman, shall be dismayed*, their courage shall fail them, *to the end that every one of the mount of Esau may be cut off by slaughter*, and none escape; the weak and feeble and unarmed must fall of course into the hand of the destroyer, when the *mighty men are dismayed*, and not only lose the day, but lose their lives, because they have *lost their spirit*. *Howl fir-trees if the cedars be shaken.* Note, The death or disuniting of the mighty, oft proves the death and destruction of the many; and it is in vain to depend upon mighty men for our protection, if we have not an almighty God for us, much less if we have an almighty God against us.

10. ¶ For thy violence against thy brother Jacob, shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. 11. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. 12. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother, in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of that destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. 13. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity; nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity. 14. Neither shouldest thou have stood in the cross-way, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. 15. For the day of the LORD is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee, thy reward shall return upon thine own head. 16. For as ye have drunk upon my holy mountains, so shall all the heathen drink continually, yea, they shall drink, and they shall swallow down, and they shall be as though they had not been.

When we have read Edom's doom, no less than utter ruin, it is natural to ask, *Why, what evil hath he done?* what is the ground of God's controversy with him? Many things, no doubt, were amiss in Edom, they were a sinful people, and a people laden with iniquity; but that one single crime which is laid to their charge, as filling their measure, and bringing this ruin upon them, that for which they here stand indicted, of which they are convicted, and for which they are condemned, is the injuries and wrongs they had done to the people of God; ver. 10. It is for thy violence against thy brother Jacob, that ancient and hereditary grudge which thou hast born to the people of Israel, that is it for which all this *shame shall cover thee*, and *thou shalt be cut off for ever*. Note, Injuries to men are affronts to God, the righteous God that loveth righteousness, and hateth wickedness; and, as the Judge of all the earth, he will do right for those that suffer wrong, and take vengeance on those that do wrong. All violence, all unrighteousness is sin, but it is a great aggravation of the violence, if it be done either, (1.) Against any of our own people; it is violence against thy brother; thy near relation, to whom thou shouldest be a Goel, a redeemer, whom it is thy duty to right, if others wronged him; how wicked is it then for thee thyself to wrong him! thou *standest* and abusest *thine own mother's son*, this makes the sin exceeding sinful, Psal. l. 20. Or, (2.) Much more if it be done against any of God's people; it is thy brother Jacob, that is in covenant with God, and dear to him. Thou hatest him whom God has loved, and be-

cause God hath loved him; him whose cause God espouseth, and will plead with jealousy; and in whose interests God is pleased so far to interest himself, as that he takes the violence done to him as done to himself; *whoso toucheth Jacob, toucheth the apple of the eye of Jacob's God*. So that it is *crimen læsæ majestatis*, for which, as for high-treason, let Edom expect an ignominious punishment, *shame shall cover thee*, and a ruining one, *thou shalt be cut off for ever*.

In the following verses we are told more particularly,

1. What the violence was which Edom did against his brother Jacob, and what are the proofs of this charge. It doth not appear that the Edomites did themselves invade Israel, but that was more for want of power than will, they had malice enough to do it, but were not a match for them; but that which is laid to their charge is, their barbarous carriage towards Judah and Jerusalem, when they were in distress, and ready to be destroyed, probably by the Chaldeans; or, upon occasion of other the calamities of the Jews; for this seems to have been always their temper towards them. See this charged upon the Edomites, *Psal. cxxxvii. 7.* that in the day of Jerusalem they said, *raise it, raise it*, and *Ezek. xxv. 12.* They are here told particularly what they did, by being told what they should not have done, ver. 12, 13, 14. *thou shouldest not have looked*, *thou shouldest not have entered*; but thou didst do so. Note, In reflecting upon our selves it is good to compare what we have done with what we should have done, our practice with the rule, that we may discover wherein we have done amiss, have done those things which we ought not to have done; we should not have been where we were at such a time, should not have been in such and such company, should not have said what we said, not have taken the liberty that we took. Sin thus looked upon in the glass of the commandment, will appear exceeding sinful. Let us see,

1. What was the case of Judah and Jerusalem, when the Edomites behaved themselves thus basely, and insulted over them. (1.) It was a day of distress with them, ver. 12. it was the day of their calamity, so it is called three times, ver. 13. with the Edomites it was a day of prosperity and peace, when with the Israelites it was a day of distress and calamity, for judgment commonly begins at the house of God. Children are corrected, when strangers are let alone: (2.) It was the day of their destruction, ver. 12. when both city and country were laid waste, were laid in ruins. (3.) It was a day when foreigners entered into the gates of Jerusalem, when the city, after a long siege was broken up, and the great officers of the king of Babylon's army, came and sat in the gates, as judges of the land; when they cast lots upon the spoils of Jerusalem, as the soldiers on Christ's garments, what shares each of the conquerors shall have; what share of the lands, what share of the goods; or, cast lots to determine themselves when and where they should attack it. (4.) It was a day when the strangers carried away captive his forces, ver. 11. took the men of war prisoners of war, and carried them off in poverty and shame to their own country: Or, such a multitude of captives that they were as an army. (5.) It was a day when thy brother himself that had long been at home, at rest in his own land, became a stranger, an exile in a strange land. Now when this was the woful case of the Jews, the Edomites their neighbours and brethren should have pitied them and helped them, consoled them and comforted them; and should have trembled to think that their own turn would come next: for if this were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

But, 2. See what was the carriage of the Edomites towards them when they were in this distress, for which they are here condemned. (1.) They looked with pleasure upon the affliction of God's people; they stood on the other side, ver. 11. afar off, when they should have come in to the relief of their distressed neighbours, and looked upon them, and their day, looked on their affliction, ver. 12, 13. with a careless unconcerned eye, as the priest and Levite looked upon the wounded man, and passed by on the other side; those have a great deal to answer for, that are idle spectators of the troubles and afflictions of their neighbours, when they are capable of being their active helpers. But this was not all, they looked upon it with a scornful eye, with an eye of complacency and satisfaction; they looked and laughed to see Israel in distress, saying, *aba, so would we have it*: they fed their eyes with the rueful spectacle of Jerusalem's ruins, and looked at it, as those that had long looked for it, and often wished to see it. Note, We must take heed with what eye we look upon the afflictions of our brethren, and if we cannot look upon them with a gracious eye of sympathy and tenderness, it is better not to look upon them at all. *Thou shouldest not have looked* as thou didst upon the day of thy brother. (2.) They triumphed and insulted over them, upbraided their brethren with their sorrows, and made themselves and their companions merry with them. They rejoiced over the children of Judah, in the day of their destruction; they had not the good manners to conceal the pleasure they took in Judah's destruction, and to dissemble it, but openly declared it, and rudely and insolently declared it to them, they rejoiced over them, crowed and hector'd, and trampled upon them. Those have the spirit of Edomites, that can rejoice over any, especially over Israelites, in the day of their calamity. (3.) They spoke proudly,

proudly, magnified the mouth, so the word is, against Israel; talked with a great disdain of the suffering Israelites, and with an air of haughtiness of the present safety and prosperity of Edom: as if it might be inferred from their present different state that the tables were turned, and now Esau were beloved, and the favourite of heaven, and Jacob hated and rejected. Note, Those must expect to be some way or other effectually humbled and mortified themselves, that are puffed up and made proud by the humiliations and mortifications of others. (4.) They went further yet, for they entered into the gate of God's people, in the day of their calamity, and laid hands on their substance; tho' they did not help to conquer them, they helped to plunder them, and put in for a share in the prey, ver. 13. Jerusalem was thrown open, and then they entered it; its wealth was thrown about, and they seized it for themselves, excusing it with this, that they had as good take it as let it be lost; whereas it was taking what was not their own. Babylon lays Jerusalem waste, but Edom by meddling with the spoil becomes *particeps criminis*, and shall be reckoned with as an accessory *ex post facto*. Note, These do but impoverish themselves that think to enrich themselves by the ruins of the people of God; and those deceive themselves who think they may call all that substance their own, which they can lay their hands on, in a day of calamity. (5.) They did yet worse things, they not only robbed their brethren, but murdered them in the day of their calamity; laid hands not only on their substance, but on their persons, ver. 14. When the victorious sword of the Chaldeans was making bloody work among the Jews, many made their escape, and were in a fair way to save themselves by flight, but the Edomites basely intercepted them, stood in the cross-way where several roads met, by each of which the trembling Israelites were making the best of their way, from the fury of the pursuers, and there they stopped them: some they barbarously and coward-like cut off themselves; others they took prisoners, and delivered up to the pursuers, only to ingratiate themselves with them, because they were now the conquerors. They should not have been thus cruel to them that lay at their mercy, and never had done, nor were ever likely to do them any hurt; should not have betrayed those whom they had such a fair opportunity to protect; but such are the tender mercies of the wicked. One cannot read this without a high degree of compassion towards those that were thus basely abused, that when they fled from the sword of an open enemy, and thought they were got out of the reach of it, fell upon and fell by the sword of a treacherous neighbour, that they were not apprehensive of any danger from: nor without a high degree of indignation towards those that were so perfectly lost to all humanity, as to exercise such cruelty upon such proper objects of compassion. (6.) In all this they joined with the open enemies and persecutors of Israel; even thou wast as one of them, an accessory equally guilty with the principals. He that joins in with evil doers, and is aiding and abetting in their evil deeds, shall be reckoned, and shall be reckoned with, as one of them.

2. What the shame is that shall cover them, for this violence of theirs. (1.) They shall soon find that the cup is going round, even the cup of trembling, and when they come to be in the same calamitous condition that the Israel of God is now in, they will be ashamed to remember how they triumphed over them, ver. 15. The day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen, when God will recompense tribulation to the troubles of his church. Tho' judgment begin at the house of God it shall not end there. This should effectually restrain us from triumphing over others in their misery, that we know not how soon it may be our own case. (2.) Their enmity to the people of God, and the injuries they have done them shall be recompensed into their own bosoms. As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; the righteous God will render both to nations and to particular persons according to their works; and the punishment is often made exactly to answer the sin; and those that have abused others, came to be themselves abused in like manner. The just and jealous God will find out a time and way to avenge the wrongs done to his people, on those that have been injurious to them. And, ver. 16. As ye have drunk upon my holy mountain, i. e. as God's professing people who inhabit his holy mountain, have drunk deep of the cup of affliction, and their being of the holy mountain would not excuse them, so shall all the heathen drink, in their turn, of the same bitter cup; for if God bring evil on the city that is called by his name, shall they be unpunished that never knew his name? See Jer. xxv. 29. And it is part of the burthen of Edom, Jer. xlix. 12. They whose judgment was not to drink of the cup, i. e. who had reason to promise themselves an exemption from it, have assuredly drunken, and shall Edom go unpunished, that is the generation of God's wrath? No, thou shalt surely drink of it; the cup of trembling shall be taken out of the hand of God's people, and put into the hand of them that afflict them, Isa. li. 22, 23. Nay, they may expect their case to be worse in the day of their distress, than that of Israel was in their day; for (1.) The afflictions of God's people were but for a moment, and soon had an end, but their enemies shall drink continually the wine of God's wrath, Rev. xiv. 10. (2.) The dregs of the cup are reserved for the wicked of the earth, Psal. lxxv. 8. they shall drink and swallow down, or sup up, as the margin reads it, shall drink it to the bottom. (3.) The people

of God tho' they may be made to drink of the wine of astonishment for a while, Psal. lx. 3. yet they shall recover it, and come to themselves again; but the heathen shall drink and be as tho' they had not been, i. e. there shall be neither any remains, nor any remembrance of them, but they shall be wholly extirpated, and rooted out. So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord, so they shall perish if they turn not.

17. ¶ But upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness, and the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions. 18. And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them, and devour them, and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau; for the LORD hath spoken it. 19. And they of the south shall possess the mount of Esau; and they of the plain, the Philistines: and they shall possess the fields of Ephraim, and the fields of Samaria, and Benjamin shall possess Gilead. 20. And the captivity of this host of the children of Israel shall possess that of the Canaanites, even unto Zarephath; and the captivity of Jerusalem, which is in Sepharad, shall possess the cities of the south. 21. And saviours shall come upon mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the LORD's.

After the destruction of the church's enemies is threatened, which will be completely accomplished in the great day of recompence, and that judgment for which Christ came once, and will come again into this world: here follow precious promises of the salvation of the church, with which this prophecy concludes, as those of Joel and Amos did, which however they might be in part fulfilled in the return of the Jews out of Babylon, notwithstanding the triumphs of Edom in their captivity, as if it were perpetual, yet doubtless they are to have their full accomplishment in that great salvation, wrought out by Jesus Christ, to which all the prophets bare witness. It is promised here,

1. That there shall be salvation upon mount Zion, that holy hill where God sets his anointed king, Psal. ii. 6. upon mount Zion shall be deliverance, ver. 17. There shall be those that escape; so the margin. A remnant of Israel, upon the holy mountain shall be saved, ver. 16. Christ said, salvation is of the Jews, John iv. 22. God wrought deliverances for the Jews, typical of our redemption by Christ. But mount Zion is the gospel-church, from thence the New-Testament-law went forth, Isa. ii. 3. There salvation shall be preached and prayed for; to the gospel-church those are added that shall be saved; and those who come in faith and hope to this mount Zion, for them deliverance shall be wrought from wrath and the curse, from sin, and death, and hell, while those that continue afar off shall be left to perish.

2. That where is salvation, there shall be sanctification in order to it. And there shall be holiness, to prepare and qualify the children of Zion for this deliverance; for wherever God designs glory, he gives grace. Temporal deliverances are then wrought for us in mercy, when with them there is holiness; when there is wrought in us a disposition to receive them with love and gratitude to God; when we are sanctified, they are sanctified to us. Holiness is it self a great deliverance, and an earnest of that eternal salvation which we look for. There upon mount Zion, in the gospel-church, shall be holiness, for that is it which becomes God's house for ever; and the great design of the gospel and its grace is to plant and promote holiness. There shall be the holy Spirit, the holy ordinances, the holy Jesus, and a select remnant of holy souls, in whom and among whom the holy God will delight to dwell. Note, Where there is holiness, there shall be deliverance.

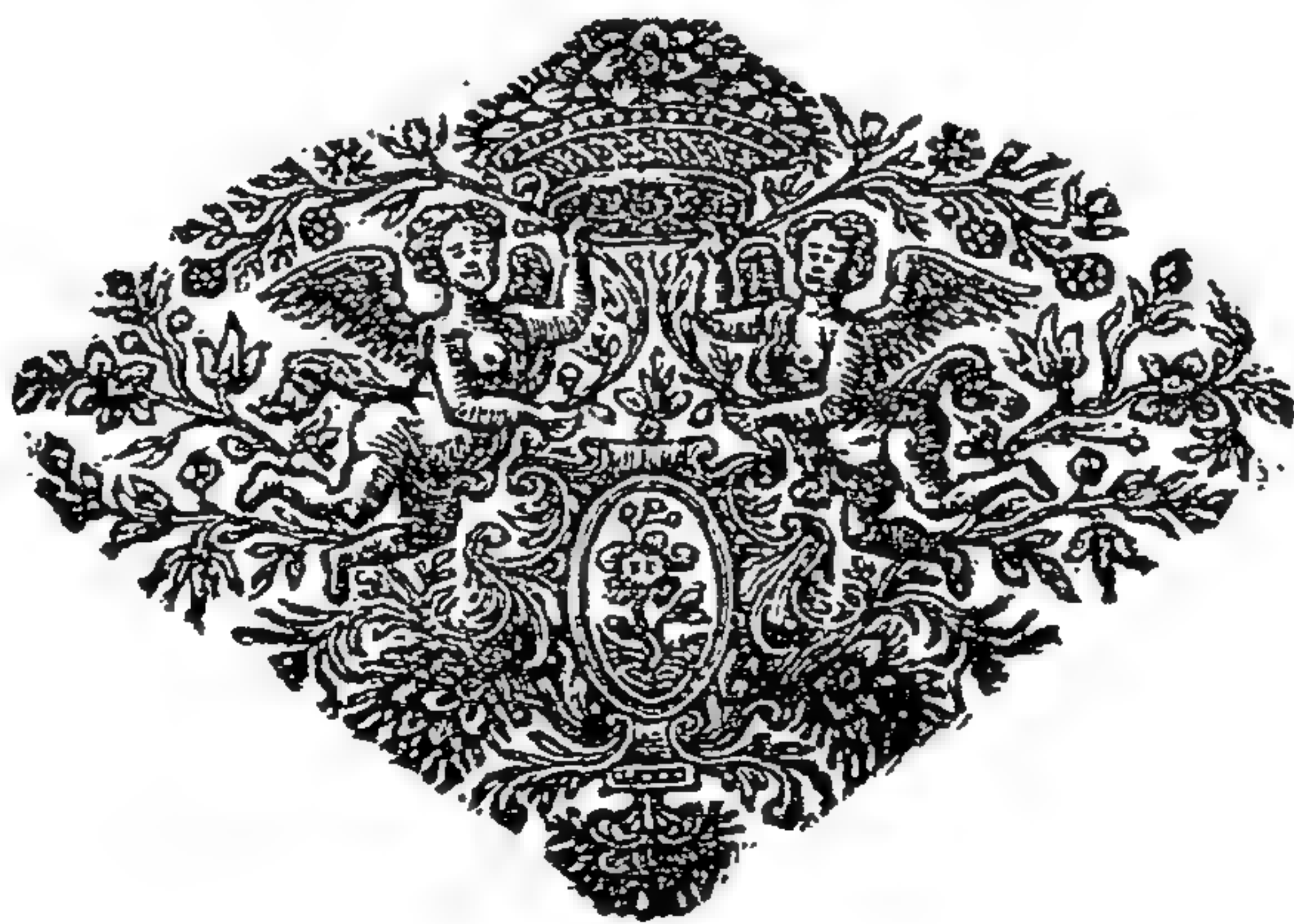
3. That this salvation and sanctification shall spread and prevail, and get ground in the world. The house of Jacob, even this mount Zion with the deliverance and the holiness there wrought shall possess their possessions, i. e. The gospel-church shall be set up among the heathen, and shall replenish the earth: the apostles of Christ by their preaching shall gain possession of the hearts of men, for him whose messengers and ministers they are; and when they possess their hearts, they shall possess their possessions, for those who have given up themselves to the Lord, give up all they have to him. When Lydia's heart was opened to Christ, her house was open to his ministers. When the Gentile nations became nations of them that were saved, were disciples, walked in the light of the Lord, and brought their glory and honour into the new Jerusalem, Rev. xxi. 24. then the house of Jacob possessed their possessions. This is in part fulfilled by the planting of the Christian religion in the world, and shall be fulfilled yet more and more, by the setting up of Christ's throne there where Satan's seat is, and the erecting of the trophies of his victory upon the ruins of the devil's kingdom.

Now here is foretold, (1.) How this possession shall be gained, and the opposition given to it got over, *ver. 18. The house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame*, for their God is and will be a *consuming fire*: and the house of Esau shall be for *stubble*, easily devoured and consumed by this fire. This is fulfilled; (1.) In the conversion of multitudes by the grace of Christ; the gospel preached in the house of Jacob and Joseph, and there owned and professed, shall be as a *fire* and a *flame* to melt and soften hard hearts, to burn up the dross of sin and corruption, that they may be purified and refined with the *spirit of judgment*, and the *spirit of burning*. Christ when he comes shall be as a *refiners fire*, *Mal. iii. 1, 2.* (2.) In the confusion of all the impenitent implacable enemies of the gospel of Christ, that oppose it, and do all they can to hinder the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah by it. The gospel-day is a day that *burns like an oven*, in which *all the proud, and all that do wickedly shall be as stubble*, *Mal. iv. 1.* Jacob and Joseph shall be as a *fire*, and a *flame*, for those that meddle with them to do them hurt, will find it is at their peril; they shall be to them as a *torch of fire in a sheaf*, *Zech. xii. 6.* The word of God in the mouth of his ministers is said to be *like fire*, and the *people as wood* to be devoured by it, *Jer. v. 14.* And the *man of sin* is to be consumed by the *breath of Christ's mouth*, *2 Thes. ii. 8.* Those that are not refined as gold by the fire of the gospel, shall be consumed as dross by it; for it will be a favour either of life or death.

When idols and idolatry were abolished, and the wealth and power of the nations were brought into the service of Christ and his gospel, and the spoils of the *strong men armed* were divided by him that was *stronger than he*, then the house of Jacob and Joseph devoured the house of Esau, so that there was none of them left remaining. This the Lord spoke by his prophets, and this he did by his apostles. (2.) How far this possession shall extend, *ver. 19, 20.* This is described in Jewish language, which speaks the accessions made to the land of Israel, after the return out of captivity in Babylon. The captivity of this host of Israel, i. e. this host of Israel that has been so long in captivity, and now they are come back are still called the *children of the captivity*; those shall not only recover their own land, but shall gain ground upon their neighbours adjoining to them; some of whom shall become *proselytes*, and shall incorporate with the Jews, who by possessing them in a holy communion, possess their land. We must reckon our selves truly enriched by the conversion of our neighbours to the fear of God, and the faith of Christ, and their coming to join with us in the worship of God. Such an accession to our Christian communion, we must reckon to be more our wealth and strength, than an accession to our estates. Or, the ancient inhabitants of those lands that were carried away into captivity, being lost, and never returning to their estates, the children of Israel shall take possession of that which lies next them, for their numbers shall so increase that their own land shall be too strait for them, and their neighbours estates shall *escheat* to them, *ob defectum sanguinis.* They shall enter upon that which is adjoining to them: The country of Esau shall be possessed by them of the south parts of Canaan, for to them it lies contiguous. They of the plain, on the west of Canaan, which was a champain country, shall enter upon the land of the *Philistines* their neighbours. They of Judah, which was the chief of the two returning tribes, shall possess the field of *Ephraim and Samaria*, which before belonged to the *ten tribes*; and Ben-

jamin the other tribe shall possess Gilead, on the other side Jordan, which had belonged to the two tribes and a half. The kingdom of Israel shall join with that of Judah, both in civil and sacred interests, and as friends and brethren, shall mutually possess and enjoy one another: And both together shall possess the *Canaanites*, even to Zarephath, which *belongeth to Zidon*; and Jerusalem shall possess the *cities of the south*, even to Sepharad. Thus did the Jews enlarge their borders on all sides. The modern rabbins teach their scholars, by Zarephath and Sepharad, to understand France and Spain, grounding upon this a foolish groundless expectation, that some time or other the Jews shall be masters of those countries; and they call and count the Christians Edomites, over whom they are to have dominion. But the promise here, no doubt, has a spiritual signification, and had its accomplishment in the setting up of the Christian church, the gospel Israel, in the world, and shall have its accomplishment more and more in the enlargement of it, and the additions made to it, till the mystical body is compleated. When ministers and Christians prevail with their neighbours to come to Christ, to yield themselves to the Lord, they possess them. The converts that Abraham made, are said to be the *souls that he had gotten*, *Gen. xii. 5.* The possession is gained, not *vi & armis*, for the *weapons of our warfare are not carnal*, but *spiritual*; it is by the preaching of the gospel, and the power of divine grace given along with it, that this possession is got and kept.

4. That the kingdom of the Redeemer should be erected and maintained, to the comfort of his loyal subjects, and the terror and shame of all his enemies, *ver. 21. The kingdom shall be the Lord's*, the Lord Christ's; God shall give it him, by putting all things into his hand, all power both in heaven and in earth; men shall give it him, by resigning themselves to him as his willing people, and appointing him their head: Now the work of kings is to protect their subjects, and suppress their enemies; and this Christ will do; he will both reward and punish. (1.) The mountain of Zion shall be saved; on it *saviours* shall come; the preachers of the gospel, who are called *saviours*, because their business is to save themselves, and those that hear them; and in this they are *workers together with Christ*, but to little purpose, if he by his grace did not *work together with them*. (2.) The mountain of Esau shall be judged; and the same that come as *saviours* on mount Zion, shall judge the mountain of Esau; for the word of the gospel in their mouth that saves believers judgeth unbelievers, convinceth and condemns them. Christ's ministers are *saviours on mount Zion*, when they preach that he that believes shall be saved, but they judge the mount of Esau, when they preach that he that believeth not shall be damned, which they are not only commissioned but commanded to do, *Mark xvi. 16.* And in the course of God's providence his scripture is fulfilled; when God raiseth up friends to the church in her distress, as he raised up judges to deliver Israel of old, *Judg. ii. 16.* then *saviours come on mount Zion*, to save it from being sunk and ruined; and when the enemies of the church are brought down, and their power broken, then is the mount of Esau judged; and this shall be done in every age in such a way as God thinks best, we may depend upon it, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church, but the church shall prevail against them; for the kingdom shall be the Lord's, the kingdoms of the world shall become his, and he has taken, and will take to himself, his great power and reign.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f J O N A H.

This book of Jonah, tho' it be placed here in the midst of the prophetical books of scripture, yet it is rather a history than a prophecy; one line of prediction there is in it, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown; the rest of the book is a narrative of the preface to, and the consequences of, that prediction. In the midst of the obscure prophecies before and after this book, wherein are many things dark and hard to be understood, which are puzzling to the learned, and are strong meat for strong men, comes in this plain and pleasant story, which is entertaining to the weakest, and milk for babes. Probably Jonah was himself the penman of this book, and he, as Moses and other inspired penmen, records his own faults, which is an evidence that in these writings they designed God's glory and not their own. We read of this same Jonah, 2 Kings xiv. 25. where we find that he was of Gath-hepher in Galilee, in a city that belongs to the tribe of Zebulun; in a remote corner of the land of Israel: For the Spirit, which like the wind blows where it listeth, will as easily find out Jonah in Galilee, as Isaiah at Jerusalem. We find also that he was a messenger of mercy to Israel in the reign of Jeroboam the second, for the success of his arms, in the restoring of the coast of Israel, is said to be according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the prophet; Those prophecies were not committed to writing, but this against Nineveh was, chiefly for the sake of the story that depends upon it, and that is recorded chiefly for the sake of Christ of whom Jonah was a type, it contains also very remarkable instances of human infirmity in Jonah; and of God's mercy both in pardoning repenting sinners, witness Nineveh, and in bearing with repining saints, witness Jonah.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have (1.) A command given to Jonah to go preach at Nineveh; ver. 1, 2. (2.) Jonah's disobedience to that command, ver. 3. (3.) The pursuit and arrest of him for that disobedience by a storm, in which he was asleep, ver. 4—6. (4.) The discovery of him and his disobedience to be the cause of the storm, ver. 7—10. (5.) The casting of him into the sea, for the stilling of the storm, ver. 11—16. (6.) The miraculous preservation of his life there in the belly of a fish, ver. 17. which was his reservation for further services.

1. **N**OW the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2. Arise, go to Nineveh that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. 3. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it to go with them unto Tarshish, from the presence of the LORD.

1. The honour God put upon Jonah in giving him a commission to go and prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah signifies a dove, a proper name for all God's prophets, all his people; who ought to be *harmless as doves*; and to *mourn as doves* for the sins and calamities of the land. His father's name was Amittai, *my truth*;
26 X.

truth; for God's prophets should be *sons of truth*. To him the word of the Lord came, to him it was, so the word signifies; for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, but God's words are substance. He had been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew his voice from that of a stranger, the orders now given him were, *Arise, go to Nineveh that great city*, ver. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city, *Gen. x. 11. a great city, that great city*, forty-eight miles in compass, some make it much more; great is the number of the inhabitants, as appears, by the multitude of infants in it, *chap. iv. 11. great in wealth*, there was no end of its store, *Nah. ii. 9. great in power and dominion*, it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. A great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God; how many great cities, and great nations are there that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. This great city was a wicked city, *their wickedness is come up before me*, their malice, so some read it, *their wickedness was presumptuous*, and they sin with a high hand. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners but making one another sin; their wickedness is come up, that is, it is come to a high degree, to the highest pitch, the measure of it is full to the brim, their wickedness is come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down: Or, the cry of their wickedness is come up, as that of Sodom, *Gen. xviii. 20, 21. It is come up, before me; to my face*, so the word is; it is a bold and open affront to God: It is sinning against him, in his sight, therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before to proclaim war, and to sound an alarm, *cry aloud, spare not*; he must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that has ears to hear let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city, when the cry of sin comes up to God, the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot, against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbour nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burthen of Nineveh, but Jonah must go and carry the message himself; arise quickly, apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet, *arise, and go to Nineveh*. Those that go on God's errands, must rise and go; must stir up themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs.

2. The dishonour Jonah did to God, in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent, ver. 3. But Jonah instead of rising to go to Nineveh, rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away from the presence of the Lord; and if he might but do that, he cared not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any whither from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which when it put him upon this work he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of; some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews, that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel, (which in Ezekiel, and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake) and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it, if he could but get out of the borders of that land. (1.) Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it; either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not; or, because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city; he consulted with flesh and blood, and declined the embassy, because he could not go with safety; or, because he was jealous for the prerogatives of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of divine revelation; he feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews, to another nation that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself, *chap. iv. 2. that the reason of his aversion to this journey was, because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them, and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God.* (2.) He therefore went to Tarshish; to Tarsus in Cilicia, so some, probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to abscond, he went to Joppa, a famous seaport in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish; and there he found one; providence seemed to favour his design, and give him an opportunity to escape, we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way; he found the ship just ready to weigh anchor, perhaps and to hoise sail for Tarshish; and so he lost no time, but perhaps therefore he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither, otherwise all places were alike to him; he did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. So he paid the fare thereof, for he would not stick at the charge, so he could

but gain his point and get at a distance from the presence of the Lord; he went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah forgetting his dignity, as well as duty, herded himself with them; and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish. See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns, that therefore he was not rebellious neither turned away back, because God not only spake to him but opened his ear; *Isa. i. 5. Let us learn hence, to cease from man, and not to be too confident either of ourselves, or others, in a time of trial, but let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.*

4. ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship, into the sea, to lighten it of them: but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6. So the ship-master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy GOD, if so be that GOD will think upon us, that we perish not. 7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9. And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew, and I fear the LORD the GOD of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. 10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? (for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.)

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish he thought himself safe enough, but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had run his colours.

1. God sends a pursuivant after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, ver. 4. God has the winds in his treasure, *Psal. cxxxv. 7. and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth*, so the word is, with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gathers the winds in his fist, *Prov. xxx. 4. where he holds them, and whence he squeezeth them when he pleaseth, for tho' as to us the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs.* The effects of this wind was a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin brings storms and tempests in the soul, in the family, in churches and nations, it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to that degree that the ship was like to be broken, the mariners expected no other, that ship, so some read it, that and no other; that other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet it should seem that ship in which Jonah was, was tossed more than any other, and was more in danger: This wind was sent after Jonah to fetch him back again to God and to his duty, and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, tho' it be by a tempest.

2. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, ver. 5. The mariners were affected with their danger, tho' it was not with them that God had this controversy; (1.) They were afraid; tho' their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains. (2.) They cried every man unto his god; this was the effect of their fear, many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea; *Lord in trouble have they visited thee. Every man of them prayed, they were not some praying and others reviling; but every man engaged, as the danger was general, so was the address to heaven, there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself.* They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelar deity, it is a testimony against atheism, that every man had a god, and had the belief of a God; But it is an instance of the folly of paganism, that they had gods many; every man the god he had a fancy for; whereas there can be but one God, there needs be no more. But tho' they had lost that

dictate of the light of nature, that there is but *one God*, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature, that God is to be prayed to; *should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 19. and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger; *call upon me in the time of trouble; is any afflicted?* is any frightened? *let him pray.* (3.) Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves: for that is the rule, *help thy self, and God will help thee*; they *cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them*; as Paul's mariners in a like case, cast forth even the *tackling of the ship*, and the *wheat*, Acts xxvii. 18, 19, 39. These here were making a *trading voyage*, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and merchandizes, by which they hoped to get *gain*, but now they are content to *suffer loss*, by throwing them all overboard, to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is; *skin for skin*, and *all that a man has will he give for it*, and shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul. See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us; riches makes themselves wings, and flee away; nay, and the case may be such, that we may be under a necessity of making them wings and driving them away, as here; when they could not be *kept for the owners thereof* but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and *sink that which otherwise would sink them*; tho' they have no prospect of ever recovering it: O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour, which they cannot keep without *making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, and ruining their souls for ever! And they that thus quit their temporal interests, for the securing of their spiritual welfare, will be unspeakable gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms, they shall find again *to life eternal*.

But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected him busier than any there, but we find him *gone down* into his cabin, nay, into the *hold*, *between the sides of the ship*, and there he *lies*, and is *fast asleep*; neither the noise without nor the sense of guilt within waked him. Perhaps, for some time before he had avoided sleeping, for fear of God's speaking to him again in a dream, and now he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the faster. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to *take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it*. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to *watch therefore*.

3. The *master of the ship* called Jonah up to his prayers, ver. 6. The *ship-master* came to him, and bid him for shame get up both to *pray for life*, and *prepare for death*; he gave him, (1.) A just and necessary chiding, *What meanest thou, O sleeper?* Here we commend the ship-master, who gave him this reproof, for tho' he was a stranger to him he was for the present as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul, we must help as we can to *save it from death*. We pity Jonah, who *needed* this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but being out of the way of his duty, he doth himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry ship-master. See how men, by their sin and folly, *diminish* themselves and make themselves *mean*: Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step towards his recovery; as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked *what they mean*. (2.) A pertinent word of advice; *arise, call upon thy God*; we are here crying every man to his god, why dost not thou get up and cry to thine? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest, both in the danger *dreaded*, and in the deliverance *desired*. Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy, ought in all reason to contribute their *quota* towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In times of publick distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the publick good. And the *servants of God* themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty. (3.) A good reason for this advice, *if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not*. It should seem the many gods they called upon, were considered by them but as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the ship-master speaks of *one God* still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer he suggests, that the danger was very *great* and *imminent*, we are all likely to *perish*; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be *stept*. That yet there was some hope remaining, that their destruction might be prevented, and we *may not perish*; while there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. That it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. If he *think upon us*, and act for us, we may yet be saved. And therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is never so imminent,

4. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself, or in their own distress by it, that they concluded it was a messenger of divine justice sent to arrest some one of *them*, that were in *that ship*, as having been guilty of some enormous crime; judging as the barbarous people, Acts xxviii. 4. *No doubt one of us is a murderer*, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus *pursued by the vengeance of the sea*, and it is for his sake that we all suffer. Even the light of nature teaches, that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, we must conclude *there is a cause* for it; there is evil *done by us*, or else *this evil* would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot, which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm. *Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us*. None of them suspected himself, or said, *Is it I, Lord, is it I?* But they suspected *one another*, and would *find out the man*. Note, It is a desirable thing when any evil is upon us, to know *for what cause* it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and the grievance being *redressed* the grief may be *removed*. And in order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, Lord, *shew me wherefore thou contendest with me: That which I see not teach thou me*. These mariners desired to know the person that was the *dead weight* in their ship, the *accursed thing*, that that one man might *die for the people*, and that the whole ship might *not be lost*, and that was not only *expedient* but highly *just*. In order to this they *cast lots*, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom *all hearts are open*, and from whom *no secret is hid*; agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination; and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord*. Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a *sacred thing*, and to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians, if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to providence.

3. The lot fell upon *Jonah*, who could have saved them this trouble, if he would but have told them what his own conscience told him, *thou art the man*; but as is usual with criminals, he never confesseth till he finds he cannot help it; till *the lot falls upon him*. We may suppose there were those in the ship, who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest *pursues*, and that the lot *pitcheth upon*; for it is *his own child*, his own servant, that the parent, that the master, *corrects*, if they do amiss, others that offend he *leaves to the law*. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners; and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living. *God's right hand will find out* all his servants that *desert* him, as well as *all his enemies* that have *designs* against him; yea, tho' they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down *to the sides of the ship*.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination, before the master and mariners: He was a stranger, none of them could say they knew the prisoner, or had any thing to lay to his charge, and therefore must *extort* a confession from him, and judge him *out of his own mouth*; and for this there needed no *rack*, the *shipwreck* they were in danger of was sufficient to *frighten* him, so as to make him *tell the truth*. Tho' it was discovered by *the lot*, that he was the person *for whose sake* they were thus damaged, and exposed, yet they did not fly *outrageously* upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but *calmly* and *mildly* enquired into his case. There is a compassion owing to offenders when they are discovered and convicted; they give him no hard words, but *tell us, we pray thee*, what is the matter? Two things they enquire of, (1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated; *tell us, for whose cause this evil is upon us*, is it indeed for thy cause? and if so, *for what cause?* what is the offence for which thou art thus prosecuted? Perhaps, the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and carriage made them suspect that the lot had *missed its man*, had *missed its mark*, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore beg of him he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles, must not only *begin* but *pursue* the enquiry, must descend to particulars, and *accomplish a diligent search*. (2.) What his character was; both as to his calling, and as to his country. (1.) They enquire concerning his calling; *What is thine occupation?* This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them; art thou a *diviner*, a *forcerer*, a student in the *black art*? Hast thou been *conjuring* for this wind? Or, what business art thou now going on? Is it like Balaam's to curse any of God's people, and is this wind sent to stop thee? (2.) They enquire concerning his country; one asked, *Whence comest thou?* Another, not having patience to stay for an answer to that, asked *What is thy country?* and a third, to the same purpose, *Of what people art thou?* Art thou of the Chaldeans that were noted for divination; or of the Arabians that were noted for stealing?

truth; for God's prophets should be *sons of truth*. To him the word of the Lord came, to him it was, so the word signifies; for God's word is a real thing; men's words are but wind, but God's words are substance. He had been before acquainted with the word of the Lord, and knew his voice from that of a stranger, the orders now given him were, *Arise, go to Nineveh that great city*, ver. 2. Nineveh was at this time the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy, an eminent city, *Gen. x. 11. a great city, that great city*, forty-eight miles in compass, some make it much more; great is the number of the inhabitants, as appears, by the multitude of infants in it, *chap. iv. 11. great in wealth*, there was no end of its store, *Nab. ii. 9. great in power and dominion*, it was the city that for some time ruled over the kings of the earth. But great cities, as well as great men, are under God's government and judgment. A great city, and yet a heathen city, without the knowledge and worship of the true God; how many great cities, and great nations are there that sit in darkness, and in the valley of the shadow of death. This great city was a wicked city, *their wickedness is come up before me*, their malice, so some read it, *their wickedness was presumptuous*, and they sin with a high hand. It is sad to think what a great deal of sin is committed in great cities, where there are many sinners, who are not only all sinners but making one another sin; their wickedness is come up, that is, it is come to a high degree, to the highest pitch, the measure of it is full to the brim, their wickedness is come up, and then it is time for vengeance to come down: Or, the cry of their wickedness is come up, as that of Sodom, *Gen. xviii. 20, 21. It is come up, before me; to my face*, so the word is; it is a bold and open affront to God: It is sinning against him, in his sight, therefore Jonah must cry against it; he must witness against their great wickedness, and must warn them of the destruction that was coming upon them for it. God is coming forth against it, and he sends Jonah before to proclaim war, and to found an alarm, *cry aloud, spare not*; he must not whisper his message in a corner, but publish it in the streets of Nineveh; he that has ears to hear let him hear what God has to say by his prophet against that wicked city, when the cry of sin comes up to God, the cry of vengeance comes out against the sinner. He must go to Nineveh, and cry there upon the spot, against the wickedness of it. Other prophets were ordered to send messages to the neighbour nations, and the prophecy of Nahum is particularly the burthen of Nineveh, but Jonah must go and carry the message himself; arise quickly, apply thyself to the business with speed and courage, and the resolution that becomes a prophet, arise, and go to Nineveh. Those that go on God's errands, must rise and go; must stir up themselves to the work cut out for them. The prophets were sent first to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, yet not to them only; they had the children's bread, but Nineveh eats of the crumbs.

2. The dishonour Jonah did to God, in refusing to obey his orders, and to go on the errand on which he was sent, ver. 3. But Jonah instead of rising to go to Nineveh, rose up to flee to Tarshish, to the sea, not bound for any port, but desirous to get away from the presence of the Lord; and if he might but do that, he cared not whither he went, not as if he thought he could go any whither from under the eye of God's inspection, but from his special presence, from the spirit of prophecy, which when it put him upon this work he thought himself haunted with, and coveted to get out of the hearing of; some think Jonah went upon the opinion of some of the Jews, that the spirit of prophecy was confined to the land of Israel, (which in Ezekiel, and Daniel was effectually proved to be a mistake) and therefore he hoped he should get clear of it, if he could but get out of the borders of that land. (1.) Jonah would not go to Nineveh to cry against it; either because it was a long and dangerous journey thither, and in a road he knew not; or, because he was afraid it would be as much as his life was worth to deliver such an ungrateful message to that great and potent city; he consulted with flesh and blood, and declined the embassy, because he could not go with safety; or, because he was jealous for the prerogatives of his country, and not willing that any other nation should share in the honour of divine revelation; he feared it would be the beginning of the removal of the kingdom of God from the Jews, to another nation that would bring forth more of the fruits of it. He owns himself, *chap. iv. 2. that the reason of his aversion to this journey was, because he foresaw that the Ninevites would repent, and God would forgive them, and take them into favour, which would be a slur upon the people of Israel, who had been so long a peculiar people to God.* (2.) He therefore went to Tarshish; to Tarsus in Cilicia, so some, probably because he had friends and relations there, with whom he hoped for some time to abscond, he went to Joppa, a famous seaport in the land of Israel, in quest of a ship bound for Tarshish; and there he found one; providence seemed to favour his design, and give him an opportunity to escape, we may be out of the way of duty, and yet may meet with a favourable gale. The ready way is not always the right way; he found the ship just ready to weigh anchor, perhaps and to hoist sail for Tarshish; and so he lost no time, but perhaps therefore he went to Tarshish because he found the ship going thither, otherwise all places were alike to him; he did not think himself out of his way, the way he would go, provided he was not in his way, the way he should go. So he paid the fare thereof, for he would not stick at the charge, so he could

but gain his point and get at a distance from the presence of the Lord; he went with them, with the mariners, with the passengers, with the merchants, whoever they were that were going to Tarshish. Jonah forgetting his dignity, as well as duty, herded himself with them; and went down into the ship to go with them to Tarshish. See what the best of men are when God leaves them to themselves, and what need we have when the word of the Lord comes to us, to have the Spirit of the Lord come along with the word to bring every thought within us into obedience to it. The prophet Isaiah owns, that therefore he was not rebellious neither turned away back, because God not only spake to him but opened his ear; *Isa. l. 5. Let us learn hence, to cease from man, and not to be too confident either of ourselves, or others, in a time of trial, but let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall.*

4. ¶ But the LORD sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. 5. Then the mariners were afraid, and cried every man unto his god, and cast forth the wares that were in the ship, into the sea, to lighten it of them: but Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship, and he lay, and was fast asleep. 6. So the ship-master came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy GOD, if so be that GOD will think upon us, that we perish not. 7. And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah. 8. Then said they unto him, Tell us, we pray thee, for whose cause this evil is upon us: what is thine occupation? and whence comest thou? what is thy country? and of what people art thou? 9. And he said unto them, I am an Hebrew, and I fear the LORD the GOD of heaven, which hath made the sea and the dry land. 10. Then were the men exceedingly afraid, and said unto him, Why hast thou done this? (for the men knew that he fled from the presence of the LORD, because he had told them.)

When Jonah was set on ship-board, and under sail for Tarshish he thought himself safe enough, but here we find him pursued and overtaken, discovered and convicted as a deserter from God, as one that had run his colours.

1. God sends a pursuivant after him, a mighty tempest in the sea, ver. 4. God has the winds in his treasure, *Psal. cxxxv. 7. and out of these treasures God sent forth, he cast forth*, so the word is, with force and violence, a great wind into the sea; even stormy winds fulfil his word, and are often the messengers of his wrath; he gathers the winds in his fist, *Prov. xxx. 4. where he holds them, and whence he squeezeth them when he pleaseth, for tho' as to us the wind blows where it listeth, yet not as to God, but where he directs.* The effects of this wind was a mighty tempest; for when the winds rise the waves rise. Note, Sin brings storms and tempests in the soul, in the family, in churches and nations, it is a disquieting, disturbing thing. The tempest prevailed to that degree that the ship was like to be broken, the mariners expected no other, that ship, so some read it, that and no other; that other ships were upon the same sea at the same time, yet it should seem that ship in which Jonah was, was tossed more than any other, and was more in danger: This wind was sent after Jonah to fetch him back again to God and to his duty, and it is a great mercy to be reclaimed and called home when we go astray, tho' it be by a tempest.

2. The ship's crew were alarmed by this mighty tempest, but Jonah only, the person concerned, was unconcerned, ver. 5. The mariners were affected with their danger, tho' it was not with them that God had this controversy; (1.) They were afraid; tho' their business leading them to be very much conversant with dangers of this kind, they used to make light of them, yet now the oldest and stoutest of them began to tremble, being apprehensive that there was something more than ordinary in this tempest, so suddenly did it rise, so strongly did it rage. Note, God can strike a terror upon the most daring, and make even great men and chief captains call for shelter from rocks and mountains. (2.) They cried every man unto his god; this was the effect of their fear, many will not be brought to prayer till they are frightened to it; he that would learn to pray, let him go to sea; *Lord in trouble have they visited thee. Every man of them prayed, they were not some praying and others reviling; but every man engaged, as the danger was general, so was the address to heaven, there was not one praying for them all, but every one for himself.* They cried every man to his god, the god of his country or city, or his own tutelar deity, it is a testimony against atheism, that every man had a god, and had the belief of a God; But it is an instance of the folly of paganism, that they had gods many; every man the god he had a fancy for; whereas there can be but one God, there needs be no more. But tho' they had lost that

dictate of the light of nature, that there is but *one God*, they still were governed by that direction of the law of nature, that God is to be prayed to; *should not a people seek unto their God?* Isa. viii. 19. and that he is especially to be prayed to when we are in distress and danger; *call upon me in the time of trouble; is any afflicted? is any frightened? let him pray.* (3.) Their prayers for deliverance were seconded with endeavours, and having called upon their gods to help them, they did what they could to help themselves: for that is the rule, *help thy self, and God will help thee*; they *cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea to lighten it of them*; as Paul's mariners in a like case, cast forth even the *tackling of the ship, and the wheat*, Acts xxvii. 18, 19, 39. These here were making a *trading voyage*, as it should seem, and were laden with many goods and merchandizes, by which they hoped to get *gain*, but now they are content to *suffer loss*, by throwing them all overboard, to save their lives. See how powerful the natural love of life is; *skin for skin, and all that a man has will he give for it*, and shall we not put a like value upon the spiritual life, the life of the soul, reckoning that the gain of all the world cannot countervail the loss of the soul. See the vanity of worldly wealth, and the uncertainty of its continuance with us; riches makes themselves wings, and flee away; nay, and the case may be such, that we may be under a necessity of making them wings and driving them away, as here; when they could not be *kept for the owners thereof* but to their hurt, so that they themselves are glad to be rid of them, and *sink that which otherwise would sink them*; tho' they have no prospect of ever recovering it: O that men would be thus wise for their souls, and would be willing to part with that wealth, pleasure, and honour, which they cannot keep without *making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*, and ruining their souls for ever! And they that thus quit their temporal interests, for the securing of their spiritual welfare, will be unspeakable gainers at last; for what they lose upon those terms, they shall find again *to life eternal*.

But where is Jonah all this while? One would have expected him busier than any there, but we find him *gone down* into his cabin, nay, into *the hold, between the sides of the ship*, and there he *lies*, and is *fast asleep*; neither the noise without nor the sense of guilt within waked him. Perhaps, for some time before he had avoided sleeping, for fear of God's speaking to him again in a dream, and now he imagined himself out of the reach of that danger, he slept so much the faster. Note, Sin is of a stupifying nature, and we are concerned to *take heed lest at any time our hearts be hardened by the deceitfulness of it*. It is the policy of Satan, when by his temptations he has drawn men from God and their duty, to rock them asleep in carnal security, that they may not be sensible of their misery and danger. It concerns us all to *watch therefore*.

3. The *master of the ship* called Jonah up to his prayers, *ver. 6*. The *ship-master came to him*, and bid him for shame get up both to *pray for life, and prepare for death*; he gave him, (1.) A just and necessary chiding, *What meanest thou, O sleeper?* Here we commend the ship-master, who gave him this reproof, for tho' he was a stranger to him he was for the present as one of his family; and whoever has a precious soul, we must help as we can to *save it from death*. We pity Jonah, who needed this reproof; as a prophet of the Lord, if he had been in his place, he might have been reproving the king of Nineveh, but being out of the way of his duty, he doth himself lie open to the reproofs of a sorry ship-master. See how men, by their sin and folly, *diminish* themselves and make themselves *mean*: Yet we must admire God's goodness in sending him this seasonable reproof, for it was the first step towards his recovery; as the crowing of the cock was to Peter. Note, Those that sleep in a storm may well be asked *what they mean*. (2.) A pertinent word of advice; *arise, call upon thy God*; we are here crying every man to his *god*, why dost not thou get up and cry to *thine*? Art not thou equally concerned with the rest, both in the danger *dreaded*, and in the deliverance *desired*. Note, The devotions of others should quicken ours; and those who hope to share in a common mercy, ought in all reason to contribute their *quota* towards the prayers and supplications that are made for it. In times of publick distress, if we have any interest at the throne of grace, we ought to improve it for the publick good. And the *servants of God* themselves have sometimes need to be called and stirred up to this part of their duty. (3.) A good reason for this advice, *if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not*. It should seem the many gods they called upon, were considered by them but as mediators between them and the supreme God, and intercessors for them with him; for the ship-master speaks of *one God* still, from whom he expected relief. To engage prayer he suggests, that the danger was very *great and imminent*, we are all likely to *perish*; there is but a step between us and death, and that just ready to be *stept*. That yet there was some hope remaining, that their destruction might be prevented, and we *may not perish*; while there is life there is hope, and while there is hope there is room for prayer. That it was God only that could effect their deliverance, and it must come from his power and his pity. If he *think upon us*, and act for us, we may yet be saved. And therefore to him we must look, and in him we must put our trust, when the danger is never so imminent.

4. Jonah is found out to be the cause of the storm.

1. The mariners observed so much peculiar and uncommon either in the storm itself, or in their own distress by it, that they concluded it was a messenger of divine justice sent to arrest some one of *them*, that were in *that ship*, as having been guilty of some enormous crime; judging as the barbarous people, *Acts xxviii. 4*. *No doubt one of us is a murderer, or guilty of sacrilege, or perjury, or the like, who is thus pursued by the vengeance of the sea*, and it is for his sake that we all suffer. Even the light of nature teaches, that in extraordinary judgments the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against some extraordinary sins and sinners. Whatever evil is upon us at any time, we must conclude *there is a cause* for it; there is evil *done by us*, or else *this evil* would not be upon us; there is a ground for God's controversy.

2. They determined to refer it to the lot, which of them was the criminal that had occasioned this storm. *Let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us*. None of them suspected *himself*, or said, *Is it I, Lord, is it I?* But they suspected *one another*, and would *find out the man*. Note, It is a defensible thing when any evil is upon us, to know *for what cause* it is upon us, that what is amiss may be amended, and the grievance being *redressed* the grief may be *removed*. And in order to this we must look up to heaven, and pray, *Lord, shew me wherefore thou contendest with me: That which I see not teach thou me*. These mariners desired to know the person that was the *dead weight* in their ship, the *accursed thing*, that that one man might *die for the people*, and that the whole ship *might not be lost*, and that was not only *expedient* but highly *just*. In order to this they *cast lots*, by which they appealed to the judgment of God, to whom *all hearts are open*, and from whom *no secret is hid*; agreeing to acquiesce in his discovery and determination; and to take that for true which the lot spoke; for they knew by the light of nature, what the scripture tells us, that *the lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposal thereof is of the Lord*. Even the heathen looked upon the casting of lots to be a *sacred thing*, and to be done with seriousness and solemnity, and not to be made a sport of. It is a shame for Christians, if they have not a like reverence for an appeal to providence.

3. The *lot fell upon Jonah*, who could have saved them this trouble, if he would but have told them what his own conscience told him, *thou art the man*; but as is usual with criminals, he never confesseth till he finds he cannot help it; till *the lot falls upon him*. We may suppose there were those in the ship, who, upon other accounts, were greater sinners than Jonah, and yet he is the man that the tempest *pursues*, and that the lot *pitcheth upon*; for it is *his own child*, his own servant, that the parent, that the master, *corrects*, if they do amiss, others that offend he *leaves to the law*. The storm is sent after Jonah, because God has work for him to do, and it is sent to fetch him back to it. Note, God has many ways of bringing to light concealed sins and sinners; and making manifest that folly which was thought to be hid from the eyes of all living. *God's right hand will find out all his servants that desert him*, as well as *all his enemies that have designs against him*; yea, tho' they flee to the uttermost parts of the sea, or go down to *the sides of the ship*.

4. Jonah is hereupon brought under examination, before the master and mariners: He was a stranger, none of them could say they knew the prisoner, or had any thing to lay to his charge, and therefore must *extort* a confession from him, and judge him *out of his own mouth*; and for this there needed no *rack*, the *shipwreck* they were in danger of was sufficient to *frighten* him, so as to make him *tell the truth*. Tho' it was discovered by *the lot*, that he was the person *for whose sake* they were thus damaged, and exposed, yet they did not fly *outrageously* upon him, as one would fear they might have done, but *calmly* and *mildly* enquired into his case. There is a compassion owing to offenders when they are discovered and convicted; they give him no hard words, but *tell us, we pray thee, what is the matter?* Two things they enquire of, (1.) Whether he would himself own that he was the person for whose sake the storm was sent, as the lot had intimated; *tell us, for whose cause this evil is upon us*, is it indeed for thy cause? and if so, *for what cause?* what is the offence for which thou art thus prosecuted? Perhaps, the gravity and decency of Jonah's aspect and carriage made them suspect that the lot had *missed its man*, had *missed its mark*, and therefore they would not trust it, unless he would himself own his guilt; they therefore beg of him he would satisfy them in this matter. Note, Those that would find out the cause of their troubles, must not only *begin* but *pursue* the enquiry, must descend to particulars, and *accomplish a diligent search*. (2.) What his character was; both as to his calling, and as to his country. (1.) They enquire concerning his calling; *What is thine occupation?* This was a proper question to be put to a vagrant. Perhaps they suspected his calling to be such as might bring this trouble upon them; art thou a *diviner*, a *forcerer*, a student in the *black art*? Hast thou been *conjuring* for this wind? Or, what business art thou now going on? Is it like Balaam's to curse any of God's people, and is this wind sent to stop thee? (2.) They enquire concerning his *country*; one asked, *Whence comest thou?* Another, not having patience to stay for an answer to that, asked *What is thy country?* and a third, to the same purpose, *Of what people art thou?* Art thou of the Chaldeans that were noted for divination; or of the Arabians that were noted for steal-

ing?

ing? They wish to know of what *country* he was, that knowing who was the god of his *country*, they might guess whether he was one that could do them any kindness in this storm.

5. In answer to these interrogatories, Jonah makes a full discovery. (1.) Did they enquire concerning his *country*? he tells them he is an *Hebrew*, ver. 9. not only of the nation of Israel, but of their religion which they have received from their fathers. He is an *Hebrew*, and therefore is the more ashamed to own that he is a *criminal*; for the sins of Hebrews, that make such a profession of religion, and enjoy such privileges, are greater than the sins of others, and more exceeding sinful. (2.) Did they enquire concerning his *calling*, *What is his occupation*? In answer to that, he gives an account of his religion, for that was *his calling*, that was *his occupation*, that was it he made a *business* of, *I fear the Lord Jehovah*, that is the God I worship, the God I pray to, even the *God of heaven*, the sovereign Lord of all, that has *made the sea*, and *the dry land*, and has the command of both. Not the god of one particular *country*, which they enquired after, and such as the gods were that they had been every man calling upon, but *the God of the whole earth*; who having made both the *sea* and the *dry land* makes what work he pleaseth in both, and makes what use he pleaseth of both. This he mentions not only as condemning himself for his folly, in fleeing from the presence of this God, but as designing to bring these mariners from the worship and service of their many gods to the knowledge and obedience of the one only living and true God. When we are among those that are strangers to us, we should do what we can to bring them acquainted with God, by being ready upon all occasions to own our relation to him, and our reverence for him. (3.) Did they enquire concerning his *crime*, for which he is now prosecuted? he owns that he *fled from the presence of the Lord*, that he was here out-running his duty, and the storm was sent to fetch him back. We have reason to think he told them this with sorrow and shame, justifying God, and condemning himself, and intimating to the mariners what a great God Jehovah is, who could send such a messenger as this tempest was after a runaway servant.

6. We are told what *impression* this made upon the mariners; *the men were exceedingly afraid*, and justly, for they perceive (1.) That God is angry, even that God that made *the sea* and *the dry land*: this tempest comes from the hand of an offended justice, and therefore they have reason to fear it will go hard with them. Judgments inflicted for some particular sin have a peculiar weight and terror in them. (2.) That God is angry with one that *fears* and *worships* him, only for once *out-running* his work in a particular instance, this made them *afraid for themselves*: If a prophet of the Lord be thus severely punished for one offence, what will become of us that have been guilty of so many, and great, and heinous offences? *If the righteous be thus scarcely saved*, and for a single act of disobedience thus closely pursued, *Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear*? 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18. They said to him, *Why hast thou done this*? If thou fear the God that made *the sea* and *the dry land*, why wast thou such a fool as to think thou couldst flee from his presence? what an absurd, unaccountable thing is it! *Thus he was reprov'd*, as Abraham by Abimelech, Gen. xx. 16. for if the professors of religion do an ill thing, they must expect to hear of it from those that make no such profession. *Why hast thou done this to us*? So it may be taken; Why hast thou involved us in the prosecution? Note, Those that commit a wilful sin, know not how far the mischievous consequences of it may reach, nor what mischief may be done by it.

11. ¶ Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? (for the sea wrought and was tempestuous) 12. And he said unto them, Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you. 13. Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land, but they could not, for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them. 14. Wherefore they cried unto the LORD, and said, We beseech thee, O LORD, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O LORD, hast done as it pleased thee. 15. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging. 16. Then the men feared the LORD exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made vows. 17. ¶ Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

It is plain that Jonah is the man for whose sake this evil is upon them, but the discovery of him to be so was not sufficient to answer the demands of this tempest; they had found him out, but

something more was to be done, for still, *the sea wrought, and was tempestuous*, ver. 11. and again, ver. 13. it *grew more and more tempestuous*, so the margin reads it; for if we discover sin to be the cause of our troubles, and do not forsake it, we do but make ill worse. Therefore they go on with the prosecution.

1. They enquire of Jonah himself what he thought they must do with him, ver. 11. *What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm to us*? They perceive that Jonah is a prophet of the Lord, and therefore will not do any thing, no, not in his own case, without consulting him. He appears to be a delinquent, but he appears also to be a penitent, and therefore they would not insult over him, or offer him any rudeness. Note, We ought to carry it with great tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault, and are brought into distress by it. They would not *cast him into the sea*, if he could think of any other expedient, by which to *save the ship*. Or perhaps, thus they would shew how plain the case was, that there was no remedy but he must be thrown overboard; let him be *his own judge*, as he had been *his own accuser*, and he himself will say so. Note, When sin has raised a storm, and laid us under the tokens of God's displeasure, we are concerned to enquire what we shall do that the sea may be calm; and what shall we do? we must *pray* and *believe*, when we are in a storm, and study to answer the end for which it was sent, and then the storm shall become a calm. But especially we must consider what is to be done *to the sin* that raised the storm; that must be *discovered*, and penitently confessed, that must be *detested*, *disclaimed*, and utterly forsaken. What have I to do any more with it? *Crucify it, crucify it, for this evil it has done*.

2. Jonah reads his own doom, ver. 12. *Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea*. He would not himself leap into the sea, but he puts himself into their hands to cast him into the sea, and assures them that then the *sea would be calm*; and not otherwise. He proposed this in tenderness to the mariners, that they might not suffer for his sake; *Let thy hand be upon me*, saith David, 1 Chron. xxi. 17. who am guilty, let me die for my own sin, but let not the innocent suffer for it. This is the language of true penitents, who earnestly desire that none but themselves may ever smart or fare the worse for their sins and follies. He proposed it likewise in submission to the will of God, who sent this tempest in pursuit of him; and therefore judgeth himself to be cast into the sea, because to that he plainly saw God judging him, that he might not be *judged of the Lord* to eternal misery. Note, Those who are truly humbled for sin will cheerfully submit to the will of God, even in a sentence of death itself: If Jonah sees this to be the punishment of his iniquity, he accepts it, he subjects himself to it, and justifies God in it. No matter tho' the *flesh* be *destroyed*, no matter how it is destroyed, so that the *spirit* may but be *saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. v. 5. The reason he gives is, *for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you*. See how ready Jonah is to take all the guilt upon himself, and to look upon all the trouble as *theirs*; it is purely for *my sake* who have sinned that this tempest is *upon you*; therefore *cast me forth into the sea*, for (1.) I *deserve* it; I have wickedly departed from my God, and it is upon my account that he is angry with you; surely I am unworthy to breathe in that air, which for *my sake* has been hurried with winds, to live in that ship which for *my sake* has been thus tossed, cast me into the sea after the wares, which for *my sake* you have thrown into it; drowning is too good for me, a single death is punishment too little for such a complicated offence. (2.) Therefore *there is no other way* of having the sea calm. If it is I that have raised the storm, it is not casting the wares into the sea that will lay it again; no, you must cast me thither. When conscience is awakened, and a storm raised there, nothing will turn it into a calm, but parting with the sin that occasioned the disturbance, and abandoning that. It is not parting with our money that will pacify conscience, no, it is the Jonah that must be thrown overboard. Jonah is herein a type of Christ, that he *gives his life a ransom for many*; but with this material difference, that the storm Jonah gave himself up to still, was of *his own raising*; that storm which Christ gave himself up to still, was of *our raising*. Yet as Jonah delivered himself up to be cast into a raging sea, that it might be calm, so did our Lord Jesus, when he died, that we might live.

3. The poor mariners did what they could to save themselves from the necessity of throwing Jonah into the sea, but all in vain, ver. 13. *They rowed hard to bring the ship to the land*, that if they must part with Jonah they might set him safe on shore, but they could not, all their pains were to no purpose, for the sea worked harder than they could, and was tempestuous against them, so that they could by no means *make the land*; if they thought sometimes that they had gained their point, they were presently *thrown off* to sea again; still their ship was *over-laden*, their lightning it of the wares made it never the lighter as long as Jonah was in it. And besides they rowed against wind and tide, the *wind* of God's vengeance, the *tide* of his counsels; and it is in vain to contend with God, in vain to think of *saving ourselves* any other way but by *destroying our sins*. By this it appears these mariners were very loth to execute Jonah's sentence upon himself, tho' they knew it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them: They were thus very backward to it, partly from a dread of bringing upon themselves the guilt of blood, and partly from

from a compassion they could not but have for poor Jonah, as a good man, as a man in distress, and a man of sincerity. Note, The more sinners humble and abase themselves, judge and condemn themselves, the more likely they are to find pity both with God and man: The more forward Jonah was to say, *Cast me into the sea*, the more backward they are to do it.

4. When they found it necessary to cast Jonah into the sea, they first prayed to God that the guilt of his blood might not lie upon them, or be laid to their charge, *ver. 14.* When they found it in vain to row hard, they quitted their oars, and went to their prayers; *Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, unto Jehovah*, the true and living God, and no more to the gods many, and lords many, that they cried to, *ver. 5.* They prayed to the God of Israel, being now convinced by the providences of God concerning Jonah, and the information he had given them, that he is God alone. Having determined to cast Jonah into the sea, they first enter a protestation in the court of heaven, that they do not do it willingly, much less maliciously, or with any design to be revenged upon him, because it was for his sake that this tempest was upon them; no, his God forgive him, as they do! But they are forced to do it *se defendendo*, having no other way to save their own lives, and they do it as ministers of justice, both God and himself having sentenced him to so great a death. They therefore present a humble petition to the God whom Jonah feared, that they might not perish for his life. See, (1.) What a fear they had of contracting the guilt of blood, especially the blood of one that feared God, and worshipped him, and had fellowship with him, as they perceived Jonah had, tho' in a single instance he had been faulty. Natural conscience cannot but have a dread of blood guiltiness, and make men very earnest in prayer, as David was to be delivered from it, *Psal. li. 14.* So they were here; *We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, lay not upon us innocent blood.* They are now as earnest in praying to be saved from the peril of the sin; as they were before in praying to be saved from the peril of the sea, especially because Jonah appeared to them to be no ordinary person, but a very good man, a man of God, a worshipper of the great Creator of heaven and earth, upon which account even these rude mariners conceived a veneration for him, and trembled at the thought of taking away his life. Innocent blood is precious, but saints blood, prophets blood, is much more precious, and so they will find to their cost that any way bring themselves under the guilt of it. The mariners saw Jonah pursued by divine vengeance, and yet could not without horror think of being his executioners: Tho' his God has a controversy with him, yet think they, *Let not our hand be upon him.* The Israelites were at this time killing the prophets for doing their duty, witness Jezebel's late persecution, and were prodigal of their lives, which is aggravated by the tenderness these heathens had for one whom they perceived to be a prophet, tho' he was now out of the way of his duty. (2.) What a fear they had of incurring the wrath of God; they were jealous, lest he should be angry, if they should be the death of Jonah, for he had said, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm*; it is at your peril if you do. Lord, say they, *Let us not perish for this man's life*: Let it not be such a fatal dilemma to us; we see we must perish if we spare his life, O let us not perish for taking away his life. And their plea is good, *For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee*, thou hast laid us under a necessity of doing it; the wind that pursued him, the lot that discovered him, were both under thy direction, which we are herein governed by; we are but the instruments of providence, and it is forely against our will that we do it; but we must say, *The will of the Lord be done.* Note, When we are manifestly led by providence to do things contrary to our own inclinations, and quite beyond our own intentions, it will be some satisfaction to us to be able to say, *Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee.* And if God please himself, we ought to be satisfied, tho' he do not please us.

5. Having deprecated the guilt they dreaded, they proceeded to execution, *ver. 15.* They took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea. They cast him out of their ship, out of their company, and cast him into the sea, a raging stormy sea, that cried, give, give; surrender the traitor, or expect no peace. We may well think what confusion and amazement poor Jonah was in, when he saw himself ready to be hurried into the presence of that God as a judge, whose presence as a master, he was now fleeing from. Note, Those know not what ruin they run upon that run away from God. *Wo unto them, for they have fled from me.* When sin is the Jonah that raises the storm, that must thus be cast forth into the sea; we must abandon it, and be the death of it; must drown that which otherwise will drown us in destruction and perdition. And if we thus by a thorough repentance and reformation cast our sins forth into the sea, never to recall them or return to them again, God will by pardoning mercy subdue our iniquities, and cast them into the depths of the sea too. *Mic. vii. 19.*

6. The throwing of Jonah into the sea immediately put an end to the storm; The sea has what she came for, and therefore rests contented, she ceaseth from her raging. It is an instance of the sovereign power of God that he can soon turn the storm into a calm; and of the equity of his government, that when the end of an affliction is answered and attained, the affliction shall pre-

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sently be removed. He will not contend for ever, will not contend any longer than till we submit ourselves and give up the cause. If we turn from our sins, he will soon turn from his anger.

7. The mariners were hereby more confirmed in their belief, that Jonah's God was the only true God, *ver. 16.* Then the men feared the Lord with a great fear, were possessed with a mighty veneration for the God of Israel, and came to a resolution that they would worship him only, for the future, for *there is no other God that can destroy, that can deliver after this sort.* When they saw the power of God in raising and laying the tempest, when they saw his justice upon Jonah his own servant, and when they saw his goodness to them in saving them from the brink of ruin, then they feared the Lord: *Jer. v. 22.* As an evidence of their fear of him, they offered sacrifice to him when they came ashore again in the land of Israel, and for the present made vows that they would do so; in thankfulness for their deliverance, and to make atonement for their souls. Or perhaps, they had something yet on board which might be for a sacrifice to God immediately; or it may be meant of the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, with which God is better pleased than with that of an ox or bullock that has horns and hoofs. See *Psal. cvii. 22, &c.* We must make vows not only when we are in the pursuit of mercy, but which is much more generous when we have received mercy, as those that are still studying *what we shall render.*

Lastly, Jonah's life after all is saved by a miracle, and we shall hear of him again for all this. In the midst of judgment God remembers mercy; Jonah shall be worse frightened than hurt, not so much punished for his sin as reduced to his duty; tho' he flees from the presence of the Lord, and seems to fall into his avenging hands, yet God has more work for him to do, and therefore hath prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, *ver. 17.* A whale, our Saviour calls it, *Matth. xii. 40.* one of the largest sorts of whales, that have wider throats than others; in the belly of which has sometimes been found the dead body of a man in armour. Particular notice is taken in the history of the creation, of God's creating great whales, *Gen. i. 21.* and the leviathan in the waters made made to play therein, *Psal. civ. 26.* But God finds work for this leviathan, has prepared him, has numbred him, so the word is, has appointed him to be Jonah's receiver, and deliverer. Note, God has command of all the creatures, and can make any of them serve his designs of mercy to his people; even the fishes of the sea, that are most from under man's cognizance, even the great whales that are altogether from under man's government. This fish was prepared, lay ready under water close by the ship, that he might keep Jonah from sinking to the bottom, and save him alive; tho' he deserves to die. Let us stand still and see this salvation of the Lord, and admire his power that he could thus save a drowning man, and his pity that he would thus save one that was running from him, and had offended him. It was of the Lord's mercies that Jonah was not now consumed. The fish swallowed up Jonah, not to devour him, but to protect him; *Out of the eater comes forth meat*; for Jonah was alive and well in the belly of the fish, three days and three nights, not consumed by the heat of the animal, or suffocated for want of air; it is granted that to nature this was impossible, but not to the God of nature, with whom all things are possible. Jonah by this miraculous preservation was designed to be made (1.) A monument of divine mercy, for the encouragement of those, that have sinned and gone away from God, to return and repent. (2.) A successful preacher to Nineveh; and this miracle wrought for his deliverance, if the tidings of it reached Nineveh, would contribute to his success. (3.) An illustrious type of Christ, who was buried and rose again according to the scriptures, *1 Cor. xv. 4.* according to this scripture, for as *Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly*, so was the Son of man three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. *Mat. xii. 40.* Jonah's burial was a figure of Christ's. God prepared Jonah's grave, so he did Christ's, when it was long before ordained, that he should make his grave with the rich, *Isa. liii. 9.* Was Jonah's grave a strange one, a new one? so was Christ's, one in whom never man before was laid. Was Jonah there the best part of three days and three nights? so was Christ; but both in order to their rising again for the bringing of the doctrine of repentance to the Gentile world. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

CHAP. II.

We left Jonah in the belly of the fish, and had reason to think we should hear no more of him, that if he were not destroyed by the waters of the sea, he would be consumed in the bowels of that leviathan, out of whose mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire, and whose breath kindles coals, *Job xli. 19, 21.* But God brings his people through fire, and through water, *Psal. lxxvi. 12.* and by his power, behold, Jonah the prophet is yet alive, and is heard of again. In this chapter God hears from him, for we find

find him praying; in the next *Nineveh* hears from him, for we find him preaching. In his prayer we have, (1.) *The great distress and danger he was in*, ver. 2, 3, 5, 6. (2.) *The despair he was thereby almost reduced to*, ver. 4. (3.) *The encouragement he took to himself in this deplorable condition*, ver. 4, 7. (4.) *The assurance he had of God's favour to him*, ver. 6, 7. (5.) *The warning and instruction he gives to others*, ver. 8. (6.) *The praise and glory of all given to God*, ver. 9. And in the last verse we have *Jonah's deliverance out of the belly of the fish, and his coming safe and sound upon dry land again*.

1. **T**HEN Jonah prayed unto the LORD his God out of the fishes belly, 2. And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice. 3. For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas, and the floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me. 4. Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight, yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. 5. The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapt about my head. 6. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O LORD my God. 7. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the LORD, and my prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple. 8. They that observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercy. 9. But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving, I will pay that that I have vowed: salvation is of the LORD.

God and his servant Jonah had parted in anger, and the quarrel began on Jonah's side; he run his country, that he might outrun his work; but we hope to see them brought together again, and the reconciliation begins on God's side: In the close of the foregoing chapter we found God returning to Jonah, in a way of mercy, *delivering him from going down to the pit*, having found a ransom: in this chapter we find Jonah returning to God in a way of duty; he was called up in the former chapter to pray to his God, but we are not told that he did so; however, now at length he is brought to it. Now observe here,

1. *When he prayed*, ver. 1. *Then Jonah prayed*. Then when he was in trouble; under the sense of sin, and the tokens of God's displeasure against him for sin, then he prayed. Note, When we are in affliction we must pray, then we have occasion to pray; then we have errands at the throne of grace, and business there. Then, if ever, we will have a disposition to pray, when the heart is humbled and softened, and made serious; then God expects it, *In their affliction they will seek me early*, seek me earnestly; and tho' we bring our afflictions upon ourselves by our sins, yet if we pray in humility, and godly sincerity, we shall be welcome to the throne of grace as Jonah was. Then when he was in a hopeful way of deliverance, being preserved alive by miracle, a plain indication that he was reserved for further mercy, then he prayed. An apprehension of God's good will to us, notwithstanding our offences gives us boldness of access to him, and opens the lips in prayer, which were closed with the sense of guilt, and dread of wrath.

2. *Where he prayed; in the fish's belly*. No place amiss for prayer, *I will that men pray every where*, wherever God casts us we may find a way open heaven-wards, if it be not our own fault; *Undique ad cœlos tantundem est via*. He that hath Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, wherever he goes carries his altar along with him that *sanctifies the gift*, and is himself a living temple. Jonah was here in confinement, the belly of the fish was his prison, was a close and dark dungeon to him, yet there he had freedom of access to God, and walked at liberty in communion with him. Men may shut us out from communion with one another, but not from communion with God. Jonah was now in the bottom of the sea, yet out of the depths he cries to God; as Paul and Silas prayed in the prison, in the stocks.

3. To whom he prayed; to the Lord his God. He had been fleeing from God, but now he sees the folly of it, and returns to him; by prayer he draws near to that God whom he had gone aside from; and engageth his heart to approach him. In prayer he has an eye to him, not only as the Lord, but as his God; a God in covenant with him, for thanks be to God, every transgression in the covenant doth not throw us out of covenant. This encourageth even backsliding children to return, *Jer. iii. 22. Behold, we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God*.

4. What his prayer was: he afterwards recollected the substance of it, and left it upon record. He reflects upon the workings of his heart towards God, when he was in his distress and danger, and the conflict that was then in his breast between faith and sense, between hope and fear.

1. He reflects upon the earnestness of his prayer, and God's readiness to hear and answer, ver. 2. He said, *I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord*. Note, many that prayed not at all, or did but whisper prayer when they were in prosperity, are brought to pray; nay, they are brought to cry by reason of their affliction; and it is for this end that afflictions are sent, and they are in vain if this end be not answered: those heap up wrath, who cry not when God binds them. Job xxxvi. 13. *Out of the belly of hell, and the grave, cried I: The fish might well be called a grave, and as it was a prison to which Jonah was condemned for his disobedience, and in which he lay under the wrath of God, it might well be called the belly of hell*. Thither this good man was cast, and yet thence he cried to God; and it was not in vain, God heard him, heard the voice of his affliction, the voice of his supplication. There is a hell in the other world, out of which there is no crying to God, with any hope of being heard; but whatever hell we may be in the belly of in this world, we may from thence cry to God. When Christ lay as Jonah, three days and three nights in the grave, tho' he prayed not, as Jonah did, yet his very lying there cried to God for poor sinners, and the cry was heard.

2. He reflects upon the very deplorable condition that he was in, when he was in the belly of hell; which when he lay there he was very sensible of, and made particular remarks upon: Note, If we would get good by our troubles we must take notice of our troubles, and of the hand of God in them. Jonah observes here,

(1.) How low he was thrown, ver. 3. *Thou hadst cast me into the deep*. The mariners cast him there; but he looked above them, and saw the hand of God casting him there. Whatever deeps we are cast into, it is God that casts us into them, and he it is that after he has killed, has power to cast into hell. He was cast into the midst of the seas, the heart of the seas, (so the word is) and from thence Christ borrows that Hebrew phrase, when he applies it to his own lying so long in the heart of the earth. For he that is laid dead in the grave, tho' never so ebb, is cut off as effectually from the land of the living, as if he were laid in the heart of the earth.

(2.) How terribly he was beset. *The floods compassed me about*. The chanel and springs of the waters of the sea, these surrounded him on every side; it was always high-water with him. God's dear saints and servants are sometimes compassed with the floods of affliction, with troubles that are very forcible and violent, that bear down all before them, and that run constantly upon them, as the waters of a river in a continual succession, one trouble upon the neck of another, as Job's messengers of evil tidings: and inclosed with them on all sides, as the church complains, *Lam. iii. 7. He hath hedged me about that I cannot get out, nor see which way I may flee for safety. All thy billows and thy waves passed over me*. Observe, he calls them God's billows, and his waves, not only because he made them, *The sea is his, and he made it*; and because he rules them, for even the winds and the seas obey him; but because he had now commissioned them against Jonah, and limited them, had ordered them to afflict and terrify him, but not to destroy him. These words are plainly quoted by Jonah, from *Psal. xlii. 7*. where, tho' the translations differ a little, in the original, David's complaint is the same verbatim with this of Jonah's, *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me*. What David spoke figuratively and metaphorically, Jonah applies to himself as literally fulfilled. For the reconciling of ourselves to our afflictions it is good to search precedents, that we may find there has no temptation taken us, but such as is common to men: if ever any man's case was singular, and not to be paralleled, sure Jonah's was, and yet, to his great satisfaction, he finds, even the man after God's own heart, making the same complaint of God's waves and billows going over him, that he has now occasion to make. When God performeth the thing that is appointed for us, we shall find that many such things are with him, that even our path of trouble is no untrodden path, and God deals with us no otherwise than as he useth to deal with those that love his name. And therefore for our assistance in our addresses to God, when we are in trouble, it is good to make use of the complaints and prayers, which the saints that have been before us made use of in the like case. See how good it is to be ready in the scriptures; Jonah, when he could make no use of his bible, by the the help of his memory, furnished himself from the scripture with a very proper representation of his case, *All thy billows and thy waves passed over me*. To the same purpose, ver. 5. *The waters compassed me about even to the soul*, i. e. they threatened his life, which was hereby brought into imminent danger; or, they made an impression upon his spirit: he saw them to be tokens of God's displeasure, and in them the terrors of the Almighty set themselves in array against him; this reached to his soul, and put that into confusion. And this also is borrowed from David's complaint, *Psal. lxi. 1. The waters are come in unto my soul. When without are fightings, it is no marvel, that within are fears*. Jonah, in the fish's belly, finds the depths closing him round about, so that if he would get out of his prison, yet he must unavoidably perish in the waters. He feels the sea-weed, (which the fish sucked in with the water) wrapped about his head, so that he had no way left him to help himself, nor hope that any one else could help him. Thus are the people of God sometimes

sometimes perplexed and entangled, that they may learn not to *trust in themselves*, but in God that *raiseth the dead*, 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

(3.) How fast he was held, *ver. 6. He went down to the bottom of the mountains*, to the rocks in the sea, upon which the hills and promontories by the sea-side seem to be *bottomed*: he lay among them, nay, he lay under them; the *earth with her bars was about him*, so close about him, that it was likely to be about him for ever. The earth was so shut and locked, so barred and bolted against him, that he was quite cut off from any hope of ever returning to it. Thus helpless, thus hopeless, did Jonah's case seem to be. Those whom God contends with, the whole creation is at war with.

3. He reflects upon the very black and melancholy conclusion he was then ready to make concerning himself, and the relief he obtained against it, *ver. 4, 7. (1.)* He began to sink into despair, and to give up himself for gone and undone to all intents and purposes. When the *waters compassed him about even to the soul*, no marvel that *his soul fainted within him*, fainted away, so that he had not any comfortable enjoyments or expectations; his spirits quite failed, and he looked upon himself as a dead man. *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight*, and the apprehension of that was the thing that made his *spirit faint within him*. He thought God had quite forsaken him, would never return in mercy to him, nor shew him any token for good again. He had *no example* before him of any that were brought alive out of a fish's belly; if he thought of Job upon the dunghill; Joseph in the pit, David in the cave, yet these did not come up to his case. Nor was there any *visible way of escape* open for him, but by miracle, and what reason had he to expect that a miracle of mercy should be wrought for him, who was now made a monument of justice. His own conscience told him that he had wickedly *fled from the presence of the Lord*, and therefore he might justly *cast him away from his presence*, and in token of that, *take away his holy Spirit from him*, never to visit him more. What hopes could he have of deliverance out of a trouble, which his *own ways and doings* had *procured to himself*? Observe, When Jonah would say the worst he could of his case, he saith this, *I am cast out of thy sight*; those, and those only, are miserable whom God has *cast out of his sight*; whom he will no longer own and favour: What is the misery of the damned in hell, but this, that they are *cast out of God's sight*? For what is the happiness of heaven but the vision and fruition of God? Sometimes the condition of God's people may be such in this world, as that they may think themselves quite excluded from God's presence, so as no more to see him, or to be regarded by him. Jacob and Israel said, *My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God*, Isa. xl. 27. Sion said, *The Lord has forsaken me, my God has forgotten me*, Isa. xlix. 14. But it is only the surmise of unbelief, for God hath not *cast away his people whom he hath chosen*. (2.) Yet he recovered himself from sinking into despair with some comfortable prospects of deliverance. Faith *corrected* and *controlled* the surmises of fear and distrust. Here was a mighty struggle between sense and faith, but faith had the last word, and came off a conqueror. In trying times the issue will be good at last, provided *our faith do not fail*; it was therefore the continuance of that in its vigour that Christ secured to Peter, *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not*, Luke xxii. 32. David had fainted if he had not *believed*, Psal. xxvii. 13. Jonah's faith said, *Yet I will look again towards thy holy temple*. Thus tho' he was *perplexed*, yet *not in despair*; in the depth of the sea, he had *this hope* in him, as an *anchor of the soul, sure and stedfast*. That which he supports himself with the hope of, is, that he shall yet *look again towards God's holy temple*. (1.) That he shall *live*; he shall *look again* heavenwards, shall again see the light of the sun, tho' now he seems to be cast into utter darkness; thus *against hope* he *believed in hope*. (2.) That he shall *live and praise God*, and a good man doth not desire to live for any other purpose, Psal. cxix. 175. That he shall enjoy communion with God again in holy ordinances, shall *look towards*, and go up to, *the holy temple*, there to *enquire*, there to *behold the beauty of the Lord*. When Hezekiah desired that he might be assured of his recovery, he asked, *What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?* Isa. xxxviii. 22. as if that were the only thing, for the sake of which, he wished for health: so Jonah here hopes he shall *look again towards the temple*; that way he had *looked many a time* with pleasure, rejoicing when he was called to *go up to the house of the Lord*, and the remembrance of it was his comfort, that when he had opportunity he was no stranger to the holy temple. But now he could not so much as *look towards it*; in the fish's belly he could not tell which way it lay, but he hopes he shall be again able to *look towards it*, to *look on it*, to *look into it*. Observe, How modestly Jonah expresseth himself, as one conscious to himself of guilt and unworthiness, he dares not speak of *dwelling* in God's house, as David, knowing that he is *no more worthy to be called a son*, but he hopes he may be admitted to *look towards it*. He calls it the *holy temple*, for the holiness of it was in his eye the beauty of it, and that for the sake of which he loved, and *looked towards it*. The temple was a type of heaven; and he promiseth himself, that tho' being now a *captive exile*, he should never be *loosed*, but *die in the pit*, yet he should *look towards the heavenly temple*, and be brought safe

thither; tho' he die in the fish's belly, in the bottom of the sea, yet from thence he hopes his soul shall be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. Or, these words may be taken as Jonah's vow when he was in distress, and he speaks, *ver. 9, of paying what he vowed*; his vow is that if God deliver him he will praise him *in the gates of the daughter of Zion*, Psal. ix. 13, 14. His sin for which God pursued him was *fleeing from the presence of the Lord*, the folly of which he is now convinced of, and promiseth not only that he will never again *look towards Tarshish*, but that he will again *look towards the temple*, and will go *from strength to strength* till he appear before God there. And thus we see how faith and hope were his relief in his desponding condition; to this he added *prayer* to God, *ver. 7. When my soul fainted within me, then I remembered the Lord*, I betook myself to that cordial. He remembered *what he is*, how nigh to those that seem to be *thrown* at the greatest distance by trouble, how merciful to those that seem to have *thrown themselves* at a distance from him by sin. He remembered what he had done for him, what he had done for others, what he could do, what he had promised to do; and this kept him *from fainting*. And remembering God, he made his addresses to him, *My prayer came in unto thee*, i. e. I sent it in, and expected to receive an answer to it. Note, Our afflictions should put us in mind of God, and thereby put us upon prayer to him. When our souls faint we must *remember God*, and when we remember God we must send up a prayer to him, a pious ejaculation at least; when we *think on his name*, we should *call on his name*.

4. He reflects upon the favour of God to him, when thus in his distress he sought to God, and trusted in him. (1.) He graciously accepted his prayer, and gave admission and audience to it; *ver. 7. My prayer* being sent to him, *came in unto him*, even *into his holy temple*, it was heard in the highest heavens, tho' it was *prayed* in the lowest deeps. (2.) He wonderfully wrought deliverance for him, and when he was in the depth of his misery, gave him the earnest and assurance of it, *ver. 6. Yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God*. Some think he said this when he was vomited up on dry ground, and then it is the language of his thankfulness; and he sets it over against the great difficulty of his case, that the power of God might be the more magnified in his deliverance; *The earth with her bars was about me for ever*, and yet *thou hast brought up my life from the pit*, from the bars of the pit; or rather, we may suppose it spoken while he was yet in the fish's belly, and then it is the language of his faith; *thou hast kept me alive here, in the pit*, and therefore *thou canst, thou wilt, bring up my life from the pit*; and he speaks of it with as much assurance as if it were done already, *Thou hast brought up my life*. Tho' he has not an express promise of deliverance, he has an earnest of it, and on that he depends; he *has life*, and therefore believes his life shall be *brought up from corruption*, and this assurance he addresseth to God, *Thou hast done it, O Lord my God*. Thou art *the Lord*, and therefore *canst* do it, *my God*, and therefore wilt do it for me. Note, If the Lord be our God, he will be to us *the resurrection and the life*, will redeem our lives from destruction, from the power of the grave.

5. He gives warning to others, and instructs them to keep close to God only; *ver. 8. They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy*. That is, (1.) They that worship other gods, as the heathen mariners did, and call upon them, and expect relief and comfort from them, they *forsake their own mercy*, they stand in their own light, they turn their back upon their own happiness, and go quite out of the way of all good. Note, Idols are *lying vanities*, and those that pay that homage to them, which is due to God only, act as contrary to their interest as to their duty. Or, (2.) They that follow their own inventions, as Jonah himself had done, when he *fled from the presence of the Lord* to go to Tarshish, they *forsake their own mercy*, that mercy which they might find in God, and might have such a covenant right and title to it, as to be able to call it their *their own*; if they would but keep close to God and their duty. They that think to go any where to be from under the eye of God, as Jonah did, that think to mend themselves by out-running his service, as Jonah did, and that grudge his mercy to any poor sinners, and pretend to be wiser than he in judging who are fit to have prophets sent them, and who not, as Jonah did, they *observe lying vanities*, are led away by foolish, groundless fancies, and like him they *forsake their own mercy*, and no good can come of it. Note, They that *forsake their own duty*, forsake their own *mercy*, that run away from the *work* of their *place* and *day*, run away from the *comfort* of it.

6. He solemnly binds his soul with a bond, that if God work deliverance for him, the God of his mercies shall be the God of his praises, *ver. 9. He covenants with God*, (1.) That he will honour him in his devotions with the *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and God hath said, for the encouragement of those that do so, that they that *offer praise glorify him*. He will according to the law of Moses, bring a *sacrifice of thanksgiving*, and will offer that according to the law of nature, with the *voice of thanksgiving*. The love and thankfulness of the heart to God, is the life and soul of this duty, without it neither the *sacrifice* of thanksgiving, nor the *voice* of thanksgiving will avail any thing, but it was then by a divine appointment to be expressed by a *sacrifice*, in which the

the offerer presented the beast slain to God, not in lieu of himself, but in token of himself; and it is now to be expressed by the voice of thanksgiving, the calves of our lips, Hos. xiv. 2. the fruit of our lips, Heb. xiii. 15. speaking forth, singing forth, the high praises of our God; this Jonah here promiseth, that with the sacrifice of thanksgiving he will mention the loving-kindness of the Lord to his glory, and the encouragement of others. (2.) That he will honour him in his conversation by a punctual performance of his vows, which he made in the fish's belly. Some think it was some work of charity that he vowed, or such a vow as Jacob's was, *Of all that thou hast given me, I will give the tenth unto thee.* More probably his vow was, that if God would deliver him, he would readily go wherever he should please to send him, tho' it were to Nineveh. When we smart for deserting our duty, it is time to promise that we will adhere to it, and abound in it. Or, perhaps the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the thing he vowed, and that is it which he will pay, as David, *Psal. cxvi. 17, 18, 19.*

7. He concludes with an acknowledgement of God as the Saviour of his people; *Salvation is of the Lord; it belongs to the Lord, Psal. iii. 8.* He is the God of salvation, *Psal. lxviii. 19, 20.* He only can work salvation, and he can do it, be the danger and distress never so great; he has promised salvation to his people that trust in him. All the salvations of his church in general, and of particular saints were wrought by him, he is the Saviour of them that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10. Salvation is still of him, as it has always been, from him alone it is to be expected, and on him we are to depend for it. Jonah's experience shall encourage others in all ages to trust in God, as the God of their salvation; all that read this story shall say it with assurance, say it with admiration, that *salvation is of the Lord*, and is sure to all that belongs to him.

10. ¶ And the LORD spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land.

We have here Jonah's discharge from his imprisonment, and his deliverance from that death which there he was threatened with; his return tho' not to life, for he lived in the fish's belly, yet to the land of the living, for from that he seemed to be quite cut off; his resurrection, tho' not from death, yet from the grave, for surely never man was so buried alive as Jonah was in the fish's belly. His enlargement may be considered,

1. As an instance of God's power over all the creatures. God spoke to the fish, gave him orders to return him, as before he had given him orders to receive him. God speaks to other creatures, and it is done, they are all his ready obedient servants; but to man he speaketh once, yea twice, and he perceiveth it not, regards it not, but turns a deaf ear to what he saith. Note, God has all creatures at his command, makes what use he pleaseth of them, and serves his own purposes by them.

3. As an instance of God's mercy to a poor penitent, that in his distress prays to him. Jonah had sinned, had done foolishly, very foolishly, his own backslidings did now correct him, and it appears by his after-carriage, that his foolishness was not quite driven from him, no not by the rod of this correction, and yet upon his praying and humbling himself before God, here is a miracle in nature wrought for his deliverance, to intimate what a miracle of grace, free grace, God's reception and entertainment of returning sinners is. When God had him at his mercy, he shewed him mercy, and did not contend for ever.

3. As a type and figure of Christ's resurrection. He died and was buried to lay the storm which our sin had raised, and lay in the grave, as Jonah did, three days and three nights a prisoner for our debt, but the third day he came forth, as Jonah did, by his messengers to preach repentance and remission of sins, even to Gentiles. And thus was another scripture fulfilled, *After two days he will receive us, and the third day he will raise us up, Hos. vi. 2.* The earth trembled as if full of her burthen, as the fish was of Jonah.

C H A P. III.

In this chapter we have, (1.) Jonah's mission renewed, and the command a second time given him to go preach at Nineveh, ver. 1, 2. (2.) Jonah's message to Nineveh faithfully delivered, by which its speedy overthrow was threatened, ver. 3, 4. (3.) The repentance, humiliation, and reformation, of the Ninevites hereupon, ver. 5—9. (4.) God's gracious revocation of the sentence passed upon them, and the preventing of the ruin threatened, ver. 10.

1. AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, 2. Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto

it the preaching that I bid thee. 3. So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh according to the word of the LORD: (now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey) 4. And Jonah began to enter into the city a days journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

We have here a further evidence of the reconciliation between God and Jonah, and that it was a through reconciliation, tho' the controversy between them had run high.

1. By this it appears that God was perfectly reconciled to Jonah, that he employed him again in his service; and the commission a-new given him, was an evidence of the remission of his former disobedience. Among men it has been justly pleaded, that the giving of a commission to a criminal convicted is equivalent to a pardon, so it was to Jonah, ver. 1. The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time: for, (1.) Jonah must be tried, whether he do indeed repent of his former disobedience or no; and whether he have gotten the good designed him, both by his strange punishment, and by his strange deliverance. He had deserted his work and duty, and had been under an arrest for it, had received a sentence of death within himself, but upon his submission God had released him, had given him his life, had given him his liberty, but it is upon his good behaviour that he is released, and he must again be put upon the trial, whether he will follow the will of God, or his own will. After he has been thrown into the sea, and thrown out of it again, God comes and asks him, Jonah, wilt thou go to Nineveh now? For when God judgeth he will overcome; he will gain his point, he will bring the disobedient stubborn child to his foot at last. Note, When God has afflicted us, and delivered us out of affliction, we must hear his voice, saying to us, now return to the duties which before you neglected, and which by these providences you are called to. God now said in effect to Jonah, as Christ said to the impotent man, when he had healed him, now go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee, John v. 14. a worse thing than lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly. God looks upon men when he has afflicted them, and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault particularly for which they were corrected, and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see to it, that we receive not the grace of God in vain, neither in the correction, nor in the deliverance, for both are designed to be means of grace. (2.) Jonah shall be trusted, in token of God's favour to him. God might justly have said concerning Jonah, as we would concerning one that had cheated us, and dealt treacherously with us, that tho' we would not proceed to the rigour of the law against him, nor ruin him, yet we would never again repose a confidence in him; justly might the Spirit of prophecy, which Jonah had resisted and rebelled against, depart from him, with a resolution never to return to him any more. One would have expected, that tho' his life was spared, yet he should be laid under a disability and incapacity ever to serve the government again in the character of a prophet. But, behold, the word of the Lord comes to him again, to shew that when God forgives, he forgets, and whom he forgives, he gives a new heart and a new spirit to; he receives those into his family again, and restores them to their former estate that had been prodigal children, and disobedient servants. Note, God's making use of us, is the best evidence of his being at peace with us. Hereby it will appear that our sins are pardoned, and we have the good will of God towards us; doth his good word come unto us, and do we experience his good work in us? If so, we have reason to admire the riches of free grace, and to own our obligations to the Lord Jesus, who received gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell, even among them, and employ them in his work, *Psal. lxviii. 18.*

2. By this it appears that Jonah was well reconciled to God, that he was not now as he had been before disobedient to the heavenly vision, did not flee from the presence of the Lord, as he had done; he neither endeavoured to avoid hearing the command, nor did he decline obeying it, made no objections, as he had done, that the journey was long, the errand invidious, the delivery of it perilous, and if the threatened judgment did not come he should be reproached as a false prophet, and the impenitency of his own nation would be upbraided, (which he had objected, chap. iv. 2.) But now without murmuring and disputing, Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord; ver. 3. See here, (1.) The nature of repentance; it is the change of our mind and way, and a return to our work and duty, from which we had turned aside; it is doing that good which we had left undone. (2.) The benefit of affliction; it reduceth those to their place that had deserted it; Jonah might truly say with David, *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word;* and therefore tho' it was dreadful, tho' it was painful to me, and for the present not joyous but grievous, yet it was good, very good for me that I was afflicted. (3.) See the power of divine grace, working with affliction, for otherwise affliction of itself would rather drive men from God than bring them to him; but God by his

his grace can turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, and make those willing in the day of his power, freely willing, to come under his yoke, whose neck had been as an iron sinew. (4.) See the duty of all those to whom the word of the Lord comes, they must in all points conform themselves to it, and yield a cheerful faithful obedience to the orders God gives them. *Jonah arose*, and did not sit still in sloth or sullenness, he went directly to Nineveh, tho' it was a great way off, and a place where, it is likely, he never was before, yet thither he took his journey, according to the word of the Lord. God's servants must go where he sends them, come when he calls them, and do what he bids them; whatever appears to be the word of the Lord, we must conscientiously do according to it.

Let us now see what was the command and commission given him, and what he did in prosecution of it.

1. He was sent as a herald at arms, in the name of the God of heaven, to proclaim war with Nineveh, ver. 2. *Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, that metropolis, and preach unto it, preach against it*, so the Chaldee: what is *against us* is preached to us, that we may hear it, and take warning; and what is preached to us, if we do not give ear to it, and mix faith with it, will prove to be *against us*. Jonah is sent to Nineveh, which was at this time the chief city of the Gentile world, as an indication of God's gracious intentions, in process of time to make the light of divine revelation to shine in those dark regions. God knew that if Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon, had had the means of grace, they would have repented, and yet he denied them those means, *Matth. xi. 21, 23*. He knew that if Nineveh had now the means of grace they would repent, and he gave them those means, sent Jonah, tho' not to *preach repentance to them* expressly (for we find not he had that in his commission) yet to *preach them to repentance*, for that was the happy effect of what he had in commission. If God thus in dispensing his favours, in giving the means of grace to some places and not to others, and the Spirit of grace to some persons and not to others, acts by prerogative and in a way of sovereignty, who may say unto him, What dost thou? *May he not do what he will with his own!* He is debtor to no man. Go and preach (saith God) *the preaching that I bid thee*. That is, (1.) The preaching that I did bid thee, when I first ordered thee to go thither, chap. i. 2. go and cry against it, denounce divine judgments against it, tell the men of Nineveh that *their wickedness* is come up to God, and God's vengeance is coming down upon them. This was the message Jonah was then very loth to deliver, and therefore flew off, and went to Tarshish, but when he is brought to it the second time God doth not at all alter the message, to gratify him, or make it the more passable with him, no, he must now preach the very same that he was then ordered to preach, and would not. Note, The word of God is an unalterable thing, and will not be made to bend to the humours either of its preachers, or of its hearers; it shall never comply with their humours and fancies, but they must comply with its truths and laws. See *Jer. xv. 19*. *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*. Or, (2.) The preaching that I shall bid thee, when thou comest thither; this was an encouragement to him in his undertaking, that God would go along with him, that the Spirit of prophecy should abide upon him, and be ready to him, when he was at Nineveh, to give him all the further instructions that were needful for him. This intimated that he should hear from him again, which would be his great support in this hazardous expedition; as when God sent Abraham to offer up Isaac, he gave him a like intimation, by telling him he must do it upon one of the mountains, which he would afterwards direct him to; the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, he leads his people step by step, and so he expects they should follow him. Jonah must go with an implicit faith, tho' he knows *whither he goes*, he shall not know till he comes thither what message he must deliver, but whatever it is he must deliver it, be it pleasing or displeasing. Thus God will keep us in a continual dependence upon himself, and the directions of his word and providence; what he doth, and what he will have us to do, we know not now, but we shall know hereafter. Admirals, sometimes when they are sent abroad, are not to open their commission till they are got so many leagues off at sea; so Jonah must go to Nineveh, and when he comes there shall be told what to say.

2. He faithfully and boldly delivered his errand. When he came to Nineveh he found his diocese large, it was an exceeding great city, of three days journey, ver. 2. a city great to God, so the Hebrew phrase is, meaning no more than, as we render it, exceeding great; this honour that language doth to the great God, that great things derive their denomination from him. The greatness of Nineveh consisted chiefly in the extent of it; it was much larger than Babylon; such a city, saith Diodorus Siculus, as no man ever after built; it was one hundred and fifty furlongs long, and ninety broad, and four hundred and eighty in compass; the walls one hundred foot high, and so thick that three chariots might go a-breast upon them; on them were one thousand five hundred towers, each of them two hundred foot high. It is here said to be of three days journey; for the compass of the walls, as some relate, was four hundred and eighty furlongs, which allowing eight furlongs to a mile makes sixty

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miles, which may well be reckoned three days journey for a footman, twenty miles a day. Or walking slowly and gravely as Jonah must, when he went about preaching, it would take him up at least three days to go through all the principal streets and lanes of the city, to proclaim his message, that all might have notice of it. And when he came thither he lost no time, he did not come to look about him, but applied himself closely to his work, and when he began to enter into the city, he did not retire into an inn to refresh himself after his journey, but opened his commission immediately, according to his instructions, and he cried, and said, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*; this, no doubt, he had particular warrant and direction to say; whether he enlarged upon this text, as is most probable, shewing them the controversy God had with them, and how provoking their wickedness was, and what reason they had to expect destruction, and to give credit to this warning, or whether he only repeated these words again and again, is not certain, but this was the purport of his message. (1.) He must tell them that this great city shall be overthrown; he meant, and they understood him, that it should be overthrown, not by war, but by some immediate stroke from heaven; either by an earthquake, or by fire and brimstone as Sodom was. The wickedness of cities ripens them for destruction, and their wealth and greatness cannot protect them from destruction, when the measure of their iniquity is full, and the day of vengeance is come. Great cities are easily overthrown when the great God comes to reckon with them. (2.) He must tell them that it shall shortly be overthrown; at the end of forty days. It has a reprieve granted, so long God will wait to see, if upon this alarm given, they will humble themselves, and amend their doings, and so prevent the ruin threatened; see how slow God is to wrath: tho' Nineveh's wickedness cried for vengeance, yet it shall be spared for forty days, that it may have space to repent, and meet God in the way of his judgments. But he will wait no longer, if in that time they turn not, they shall know that he hath whet his sword, and made it ready. Forty days is a long time for a righteous God to defer his judgments, yet it is but a little time for an unrighteous people to repent and reform in, and so turn away the judgments coming. The fixing of the day thus, with all possible assurance, would help to convince them, that it was a message from God, for no man durst be so positive in prefixing a time, however he might prognosticate the thing itself; it would also startle them into a preparation for it. It may justly awaken secure sinners by a sincere conversion to prevent their own ruin, when they see they have but a little time to turn them in. And should it not awaken us to get ready for death, to consider that the thing itself is certain, and the time fixed in the counsel of God, but we are therefore kept in the dark and at uncertainty about it, that we may be always ready? We cannot be so sure that we shall live forty days, as Nineveh now was, that it should stand forty days; nay, I think it is more probable we should die within thirty or forty days, than that we should live thirty or forty years, and so many years in the day of our security we are apt to promise ourselves. We would be alarmed, if we were sure not to live a month, and yet we are careless, tho' we are not sure to live a day.

*Fleres, si scires unum tua tempora menssem,
Rides, cum non sit forsitan una dies.*

5. ¶ So the people of Nineveh believed GOD, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. 6. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7. And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh (by the decree of the king and his nobles) saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water. 8. But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto GOD: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. 9. Who can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? 10. ¶ And GOD saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and GOD repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

Here is, 1. A wonder of divine grace in the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, upon the warning given them of their destruction approaching; *Verily, I say unto you*, we have not found so great an instance of it, no not in Israel; and it will rise up in judgment against the men of the gospel generation and condemn them; for the Ninevites repented at the preaching of Jonas, but behold, a greater than Jonas is here, *Mat. xii. 41*. Nay, it did

did condemn the impenitency and obstinacy of Israel at that time. God sent many prophets to Israel, and those *well known* among them, to be mighty in word and deed, but to Nineveh he sent only one, and he a stranger, whose aspect was mean, we may suppose, and his bodily presence *weak*, especially after the fatigue of so long a journey; and yet they *repented*, but Israel repented not. Jonah preached but *one* sermon, and we do not find that he gave them *any sign or wonder*, by the accomplishment of which his word might be confirmed, and yet they were wrought upon, while Israel continued obstinate, whose prophets chose out words wherewith to reason with them, and confirmed them by *signs following*; Jonah only threatened wrath and ruin, we do not find that he gave them any calls to repentance, or directions how to repent, much less any encouragements to hope that they should find mercy if they did repent, and yet they repented; but Israel persisted in impenitency, tho' the prophets sent to them, drew them *with cords of a man*, and *with bands of love*, and assured them of great things which God would do for them if they did repent and reform.

Now let us see what was the method of Nineveh's repentance, what the steps and particular instances of it.

1. They *believed God*; i. e. they gave credit to the word which Jonah spake to them in the name of God; they believed that tho' they had many that they *called gods*, yet there is but *one living and true God*, the sovereign Lord of all; that to him they were *accountable*, that they had sinned against him, and were become obnoxious to his justice; that this notice sent them of ruin approaching came *from him*, and consequently that the ruin itself would come *from him* at the time *prefixed*, if it were not prevented by a *timely* repentance; that he is a *merciful* God, and there might be some hopes of the turning away of the wrath threatened, if they did turn away from the sins for which it was threatened. Note, They that *come to God*, that *come back to him* after they have revolted from him must *believe*, must believe that he is, that he is reconcilable, that he will be theirs if they take the right course. And observe what *great faith* God can work by very small, *weak* and unlikely means; he can bring even Ninevites, by a few threatening words, to be *obedient to the faith*. Some think the Ninevites heard from the mariners, or others, or from Jonah himself, of his being *cast into the sea*, and delivered thence by miracle, and that served for a confirmation of his mission, and brought them the more readily to believe God speaking by him. But of this we have no certainty; however Christ's resurrection, typified by that of Jonah's, served for the confirmation of his gospel, and contributed abundantly to their great success, who in his name *preached repentance and remission of sins to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*.

2. They brought word to the king of Nineveh, who, some think, was at this time Sardanapalus, others Phul, king of Assyria: Jonah was not directed to go to him first, in respect to his royal dignity; crowned heads when guilty heads, are before God upon a level with common heads; and therefore Jonah is not sent to the court, but to the streets of Nineveh to make his proclamation. However, an account is brought of his errand to the king of Nineveh, not by way of information against Jonah, as a disturber of the publick peace, that he might be *silenced and punished*, which perhaps would have been *done* if he had cried thus in the streets of Jerusalem, who *killed God's prophets, and stoned them that were sent unto her*; no, the account was brought him of it, not as of a crime, but as of a message from heaven, by some that were concerned for the publick welfare, and whose hearts *trembled* for it. Note, Those kings are happy who have such about them, as will *give them notice* of the things that *belong to the kingdom's peace*, of the warnings both of the word and providence of God, and the tokens of God's displeasure they are under; and those people are happy who have such kings over them as will *take notice* of those things.

3. The king set them a good example of humiliation; *ver. 6.* when he heard of the *word of God* sent to him, he *rose from his throne*; as Eglon king of Moab, who, when Ehud told him he had a message to him from God, *rose up out of his seat*. The king of Nineveh *rose from his throne*, not only in reverence to a word from God in general, but in fear of a word of wrath in particular; and in sorrow and shame for sin, by which he and his people were become obnoxious to his wrath. He *rose from his royal throne*, and *laid aside his royal robe*, the badge of his imperial dignity, as an acknowledgment, that having not used his power as he ought to have done for the restraining of violence and wrong, and the maintaining of right, he had *forfeited his throne and robe* to the justice of God; had rendered himself unworthy of the honour put upon him, and the trust reposed in him as a king, and it was just with God to take it from him. Even the king himself disdained not to put on the garb of a penitent, for he *covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes*, in token of his humiliation for sin, and his dread of divine vengeance. It well becomes the greatest of men to abase themselves before the great God.

4. The people conformed to the example of the king, nay, it should seem, they led the way, for they first began to *put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them*, *ver. 5.* The *least of them*, that had least to lose in the overthrow of

the city, yet did not think themselves unconcerned in the alarm: and the *greatest of them* that had used to lie at ease, and live in state, did not think it below them to put on the marks of humiliation. The *wearing of sackcloth*, especially to those who were used to fine linen, was a very uneasy thing, and they would not have done it, if they had not had a deep sense of their sin, and their danger by reason of sin, which hereby they designed to express. Note, Those that would not be *ruined* must be *humbled*; that would not *destroy their souls* must *afflict their souls*; when God's judgments threaten us, we are concerned to *humble our selves under his mighty hand*; and tho' bodily exercise alone profits nothing, and a man's *spreading sackcloth and ashes under him*, if that be all, is but a jest, it is the heart that God looks at, *Isa. lviii. 5.* yet on solemn days of humiliation, when God in his providences *calls to mourning and girding with sackcloth*, we must by the outward expressions of inward sorrow, *glorify God with our bodies*; at least by *laying aside the ornaments*.

5. A general fast was proclaimed and observed throughout that great city, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* It was ordered by the decree of the king and his nobles; the whole legislative power concurred in appointing it, and the whole body of the people concurred in observing it, and both these ways it became a *national act*, and it was necessary it should be so when it was to prevent a *national ruin*. We have here the contents of this proclamation, and it is very observable. See here,

1. What it is that is required by it. (1.) That the *fast* (properly so called) be very strictly observed. On the day appointed for this solemnity, *Let neither man nor beast taste any thing*, let them not take the least refreshment, no not so much as *drink water*; let them not plead they cannot fast so long without prejudice to their health, or that they cannot bear it, let them try for once; what if they do *feel it* an uneasiness, and *feel from it* for some time after, it is better submit to that, than be wanting in any act or instance of that repentance which is necessary to save a sinking city. Let them make themselves uneasy in body by *putting on sackcloth*, as well as by *fasting*, to shew how *uneasy* they are in mind through sorrow for sin, and the fear of divine wrath. Even the *beasts* must do penance as well as man; because they had been made *subject to vanity*, as instruments of man's sin; and that either by their *complaints*, or their *silent pining* for want of meat, they might stir up their owners, and those that attended them, to the expressions of sorrow and humiliation. Those cattle that were kept within *doors* must not be *fed and watered* as usual, because *no meat* must be *stirring* on that day: Things of that kind must be forgotten, and not minded. As when the *psalmist* was intent upon the praises of God, he called upon the inferior creatures to join with him therein; so when the Ninevites were full of sorrow for sin, and dread of God's judgments, they would have the inferior creatures concur with them in the expressions of it. The beasts that used to be covered with rich and fine trappings, which were the pride of their masters, and theirs too, must now be *covered with sackcloth*, for the great men will (as becomes them) lay aside their equipage. (2.) With their fasting and mourning they must join prayer and supplication to God; for the fasting is designed to fit the body for the service of the soul in the duty of prayer, which is the main matter, and to which the other is but preparatory or subservient. *Let them cry mightily to God*; let even the brute creatures do it according to their capacity, let their cries and moans for want of food be graciously construed as cries to God; as the cries of the *young ravens* are, *Job xxxviii. 41.* and of the *young lions*, *Psal. civ. 21.* But especially let the men, women, and children, *cry to God*, let them *cry mightily*, for the pardon of the sins that cry against them, and the preventing of the judgments which were by Jonah cried against them.

It was time to *cry to God*, when there was but a step between them and ruin, high time to seek the Lord. And in prayer we must *cry mightily* with a fixedness of thought, firmness of faith, and fervour of pious and devout affections; by *crying mightily*, we wrestle with God, we take hold of him, and we are concerned to do so when he is not only departing from us as a friend, but coming forth against us as an enemy. It therefore concerns us in prayer to *stir up all that is within us*. Yet this is not all, (3.) They must to their fasting and praying add reformation and amendment of life. *Let them turn every one from his evil way*, the evil way he hath chosen, the evil way he is addicted to, and walks in, the evil way of his heart, and the evil way of his conversation, and particularly *from the violence that is in their hands*; let them restore what they have unjustly taken, and make reparation for what wrong they have done, and let them not any more *oppress* those they have power over, or *defraud* those they have dealings with; let the men in authority at the court-end of the town turn *from the violence that is in their hands*, and not decree *unrighteous decrees*, or give wrong judgment upon appeals made to them. Let the men of business at the trading-end of the town turn *from the violence in their hands*, and use no unjust weights or measures, nor impose upon the ignorance or necessity of those they trade with.

Note, It is not enough to fast for sin, but we must fast from sin, and in order to the success of our prayers must no more regard iniquity in our hearts, Psal. lxxvii. 18. This is the only fast that God hath chosen, and will accept, Isa. lviii. 6. Zech. vii. 5, 9. The work of a fast-day is not done with the day; no, then the hardest and most needful part of the work begins, which is to turn from sin, and to live a new life, and not return with the dog to his vomit.

2. Upon what inducement this fast is proclaimed, and religiously observed, ver. 9. *Who can tell if God will turn and repent?* Observe, (1.) What it is that they hope for; that God will upon their repenting and turning change his way towards them, and revoke his sentence against them, that he will turn from his fierce anger, which they own they deserve, and yet humbly and earnestly deprecate; and that thus their ruin will be prevented, and they perish not.

They cannot object against the equity of the judgment, they pretend not to set it aside by appealing to a higher court, but hope in God himself that he will repent, and that his own mercy (to which they fly) shall rejoice against judgment. They believe that God is justly angry with them, and that their sin being very heinous, his anger is very fierce; and that if he proceed against them there is no remedy but they die, they perish, they all perish, and are undone, for who knows the power of his anger? It is not therefore the threatened overthrow that they pray for the prevention of, but the anger of God, that they pray for the turning away of. As when we pray for the favour of God we pray for all good, so when we pray against the wrath of God we pray against all evil. (2.) What degree of hope they had of it. *Who can tell if God will turn to us?* Jonah had not told them, they had not among them any other prophets to tell them, so that they could not be so confident of finding mercy upon their repentance, as we may be that have the promise and oath of God to depend upon, and especially the merit and mediation of Christ to trust to for pardon upon repentance. Yet they had a general notion of the goodness of God's nature, his mercy to man, and his being pleased with the repentance and conversion of sinners; and from this they raised some hopes that he would spare them; they dare not presume, but they will not despair. Note, Hope of mercy is the great encouragement to repentance and reformation; and tho' there be but some glimmerings of hope, mixed with great fears arising from a sense of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, and long abuse of divine patience, yet they may serve to quicken and engage our serious repentance and reformation. Let us boldly cast ourselves at the footstool of free grace, resolving that if we perish we will perish there; yet who knows but God will look upon us with compassion?

2. Here is a wonder of divine mercy in the sparing of these Ninevites upon their repentance, ver. 10. *God saw their works*, he not only heard their good words by which they professed repentance, but saw their good works by which they brought forth fruits meet for repentance, he saw that they turned from their evil way, and that was the thing he looked for and required; if he had not seen that, their fasting and sackcloth would have been as nothing in his account; he saw there was among them a general conviction of their sins, and a general resolution not to return to them, and that for some days they lived better, and there was a new face of things upon the city; and this he was greatly well pleased with. Note, God takes notice of every instance of the reformation of sinners, even those instances that fall not under the cognizance and observation of the world. He sees who turn from their evil way, and who do not, and meets those with favour that meet him in a sincere conversion; when they repent of the evil of sin committed by them, he repents of the evil of judgment pronounced against them. Thus he spared Nineveh, and did not the evil which he said he would do against it. Here were no sacrifices offered to God, that we read of, to make atonement for sin, but the sacrifice of God is a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, such as the Ninevites now had, is what he will not despise, it is what he will give countenance to, and put honour upon.

C H A P. IV.

We read with a great deal of pleasure in the close of the foregoing chapter concerning the repentance of Nineveh, but in this chapter we read with a great deal of uneasiness concerning the sin of Jonah; and as there is joy in heaven and earth for the conversion of sinners, so there is grief for the follies and infirmities of saints: In all the book of God we scarce find a servant of the Lord, (and such a one we are sure Jonah was, for the scripture calls him so) so very much out of temper as he is here, so very peevish and provoking to God himself. In the first chapter we had him fleeing from the face of God, but here we have

him in effect flying in the face of God, and which is more grieving to us, there we had an account of his repentance and return to God, but here, tho' no doubt he did repent, yet, as in Solomon's case, no account is left us of his recovering himself; but while we read with wonder of his perverseness, we read with no less wonder of God's tenderness towards him, by which it appeared he had not cast him off. Here is (1.) Jonah's repining at God's mercy to Nineveh, and the fret he was in about it, ver. 1, 2, 3. (2.) The gentle reproof God gave him for it, ver. 4. (3.) Jonah's discontent at the withering of the gourd, and his justifying of himself in that discontent, ver. 5—9. (4.) God's improving of it for his conviction, that he ought not to be angry at the sparing of Nineveh, ver. 10, 11. Man's badness and God's goodness serve here for a foil to each other, that the former may appear the more exceeding sinful, and the latter the more exceeding gracious.

1. **B**UT it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. 2. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. 3. Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. 4. ¶ Then said the LORD, Dost thou well to be angry?

See here, 1. How unjustly Jonah quarrelled with God for his mercy to Nineveh, upon their repentance. This gives us occasion to suspect that Jonah had only delivered the message of wrath against the Ninevites, and had not at all assisted or encouraged them in their repentance, as one would have thought he should have done; for when they did repent and found mercy,

1. Jonah grudged them the mercy they found, ver. 1. *It displeased Jonah exceedingly*, and would you think it? *He was very angry*; was in a great heat about it. It was very ill, (1.) That he had so little government of himself as to be displeased and very angry; he had no rule over his own spirit, and therefore as a city broken down, lay exposed to temptations and snares. (2.) That he had so little reverence of God as to be displeased and angry at what he did; as David was when the Lord had made a breach upon Uzza; whatever pleaseth God should please us, and tho' we cannot account for it, yet we must acquiesce in it. (3.) That he had so little affection to men as to be displeased and very angry at the conversion of the Ninevites, and their reception into the divine favour.

This was the sin of the Scribes and Pharisees, who murmured at our Saviour because he entertained publicans and sinners; but is our eye evil, because his is good? But why was Jonah so uneasy at it, that the Ninevites repented and were spared? It cannot be expected we should give any good reason for a thing so very absurd and unreasonable; no, nor any thing that has the face or colour of a reason; but we may conjecture what the provocation was; hot spirits are usually high spirits, only by pride comes contention both with God and man.

It was a point of honour that Jonah stood upon, and that made him angry. (1.) He was jealous for the honour of his country; the repentance and reformation of Nineveh, shamed the obstinacy of Israel, that repented not, but hated to be reformed; and the favour God shewed to these Gentiles upon their repentance was an ill omen to the Jewish nation, as if they should be (as at length they were) rejected, and cast out of the church, and the Gentiles substituted in their room.

When it was intimated to St Peter himself, that he should make no difference between Jews and Gentiles, he startled at the thing, and said, not so, Lord; no marvel then that Jonah looked upon it with regret, that Nineveh should become a favourite. Jonah herein had a zeal for God, as the God of Israel in a particular manner, but not according to knowledge. Note, Many are displeased with God under pretence of concern for his glory. (2.) He was jealous for his own honour; fearing, lest if Nineveh was not destroyed within forty days, he should be accounted a false prophet, and stigmatized accordingly: Whereas he needed not be under any discontent about that, for in the threatening of ruin it was implied, that for the preventing of it, they should repent, and if they did it should be prevented.

And no one will complain of being deceived by him that is better than his word; and he would rather gain honour among them, by being instrumental to save them, than fall under any disgrace. But melancholy men; (and such a one Jonah seems to have been) are apt to make themselves uneasy, by fancying evils to themselves that are not, nor are ever likely to be. Most of our frets, as well as our frights, are owing to the power of imagination; and those are to be pitied as perfect bond-slaves that are under the power of such a tyrant.

2. He quarrelled with God about it; when his heart was hot within him, he spake unadvisedly with his lips; and here he tells us what

what he said, *ver. 2, 3.* He *prayed unto the Lord*; but it is a very *awkward* prayer, not like that which he prayed in the fish's belly; for affliction teacheth us to pray submissively; which Jonah now forgot to do. Being in discontent he applied himself to the duty of prayer, as he used to do in his troubles, but his corruptions got head of his graces, and when he should have been praying for benefit by the mercy of God himself, he was complaining of the benefit others had by that mercy. Nothing could be spoken more unbecomingly.

(1.) He now begins to justify himself in fleeing from the presence of the Lord, when he was first ordered to go to Nineveh, for which he had before with good reason condemned himself. *Lord, saith he, was not this my saying when I was in my own country?* Did I not foresee, that if I went to preach to Nineveh, they would repent, and thou wouldest forgive them, and then thy word would be reflected upon and reproached as *yea*, and *nay*. What a strange sort of man was Jonah to dread the success of his ministry! Many have been tempted to withdraw from their work because they have *despaired* of doing good by it, but Jonah declined preaching, because he was *afraid* of doing good by it; and still he persists in the same corrupt notion, for it seems the *whale's belly* itself could not cure him of it. It was his *saying* when he was in his own country, but it was an *ill saying*, yet here he stands to it; and very unlike the other prophets, *desires the woful day* which he had foretold, and grieves because it doth not come. Even Christ's disciples *know not what manner of spirit they are of*; they did not, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did *not receive them*, much less did Jonah, who wished for fire from heaven upon the city that did *receive him*, Luke ix. 55.

Jonah thinks he has reason to complain of that when it is done, which he was before afraid of, so hard is it to get a root of bitterness plucked out of the mind, when once it is fastened there. And why did Jonah expect that God would spare Nineveh? *Because I know that thou wast a gracious God*, indulgent, and easily pleased, that *thou wast slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil*; all this is very true; and Jonah could not but know it by God's proclamation of his name, and the experiences of all ages, but it is *strange* and very *unaccountable*, that that which all the saints had made the matter of their joy and praise, Jonah should make the matter of reflexion upon God, as if that were an imperfection of the divine nature, which is indeed the greatest glory of it, that God is *gracious and merciful*. The servant that said, *I know thee to be a hard man*, said that which was *false*, and yet had it been *true* it was the proper matter of a complaint, but Jonah, tho' he saith what is *true*, yet speaking it by way of reproach, speaks very *absurdly*.

Those have a spirit of contention and contradiction indeed, that can find in their hearts to quarrel with the goodness of God, and his sparing pardoning mercy, to which we all owe it that we are *out of hell*. This is making that to be to us a *savour of death unto death*, which ought to be a *savour of life unto life*.

(2.) In a passion he wishes for death, *ver. 3.* A strange expression of his causeless passion, *now, O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me*. If Nineveh must live, let me die, rather than see thy word and mine disproved, rather than see the glory of Israel transferred to the Gentiles, as if there were not grace enough in God both for Jews and Gentiles, or as if his countrymen were the further off from mercy for the Ninevites being taken into favour. When the prophet Elijah had *laboured in vain*, he *wished he might die*, and it was his infirmity, 1 Kings xix. 4. But Jonah labours to good purpose, saves a great city from ruin, and yet *wisbeth he might die*, as if having done *much good* he were afraid of living to do more; he *sees of the travel of his soul*, and is *dissatisfied*: What a *perverse spirit* is mingled with every word he saith! When Jonah was brought alive out of the whale's belly, he thought *life* a very *valuable* mercy, and was thankful to that God who brought up *his life from corruption*, chap. ii. 6. and a great blessing his life had been to Nineveh, yet now for that very reason it is become a burthen to himself, and he begs to be eased of it; pleading *it is better for me to die than to live*: Such a word as this may be the language of grace, as it was in Paul, who desired to depart and be with Christ, which is *far better*; but here it was the language of folly and passion, and strong corruption; and so much the worse,

(1.) That Jonah was now in the midst of his usefulness, and therefore *fit to live*; he was one whose ministry God wonderfully owned and prospered; the conversion of Nineveh might give him hopes of being instrumental to convert the whole kingdom of Assyria; it was therefore very absurd for him to wish *he might die*, when he had a prospect of living to so good purpose, and could be so *ill spared*.

(2.) That he was now so much out of temper, and therefore *unfit to die*. How durst he think of dying and going to appear before God's judgment-seat when he was actually quarrelling with him? Was this a frame of spirit proper for a man to go out of the world in? But those who passionately desire death, commonly have least reason to do it, as being very much unprepared for it. Our business is to get ready to die by doing the work of life, and then refer our selves to God to take away our life when and how he pleaseth.

2. See how justly God reproved Jonah for this heat that he was in, *ver. 4.* The Lord said, *Dost thou well to be angry? Is doing*

well a displeasure to thee? So some read it; What? dost thou repent of thy good deeds? God might justly have rejected him for this impious heat he was in, might justly have taken him at his word, and have struck him *dead* when he *wished to die*, but he vouchsafes to reason with him, for his conviction, and to reduce him to a better temper: As the father of the prodigal reasoned with his elder son, when, as Jonah here, he murmured at the remission and reception of his brother. *Dost thou well to be angry?* See how mildly the great God speaks to this foolish man, to teach us to *rejoice* those that are fallen with a *spirit of meekness*, and with soft answers to *turn away wrath*. God appeals to himself, and to his own conscience, *dost thou well?* thou knowest thou dost not.

We should often put this question to ourselves, *Is it well to say thus, to do thus?* can I justify it? must I not *unsay* it, and *undo* it again by repentance, or be undone for ever? Ask,

(1.) *Do I well to be angry?* when passion is up let it meet with this check, *Do I well to be so soon angry, so oft angry, so long angry, to put myself into such a heat, and to give others such ill language in my anger?* Is this well that I suffer these head-strong passions to get dominion over me?

(2.) *Do I well to be angry* at the mercy of God to repenting sinners? That was Jonah's crime: Do we well to be angry at that which is so much for the glory of God, and the advancement of his kingdom among men? To be angry at that which angels rejoice in? and for which abundant thanksgivings will be rendered to God? We do ill to be angry at that grace which we ourselves need, and are undone without; if room were not left for repentance, and hope given of pardon upon repentance; what would become of us? Let the conversion of sinners, which is the joy of heaven, be our joy, and never our grief.

5. So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east-side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. 6. And the LORD God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. 7. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered. 8. And it came to pass when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east-wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, *It is better for me to die than to live*. 9. And God said to Jonah, *Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd?* And he said, *I do well to be angry even unto death*. 10. Then said the LORD, *Thou hast had pity on the gourd for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night*: 11. And should not I spare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more then sixscore thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?

Jonah persists here in his discontent, for the *beginning of strife*, both with God and man, *is as the letting forth of waters*, the breach grows wider and wider, and when passion gets head *ill is made worse*; it should therefore be silenced and suppressed at first. We have here,

1. Jonah's fullen expectation of the fate of Nineveh, we may suppose the Ninevites giving credit to the message he brought, were ready to *give entertainment* to the messenger that brought it, and to *shew him respect*, that they would have bid him welcome to the best of their houses and tables; but Jonah was out of humour; would not accept their kindness, nor carry it towards them with common civility; which one might have feared would have prejudiced them against him and his word: but when there is not only the *treasure* put into *earthen vessels*, but the trust lodged with men *subject to like passions as we are*, and yet the point gained, it must be owned that the *excellency of the power* appears so much the more to be of *God and not of man*.

Jonah retires, *goes out of the city*, sits alone, and keeps silence, because he sees the Ninevites repent and reform, *ver. 5.* Perhaps he told those about him that he went out of the city for fear of perishing in the ruins of it; but he went to *see what would become of the city*; as Abraham went up to see what would become of Sodom, Gen. xix. 27. The forty days were now expiring or expired, and Jonah hopes that if Nineveh be not *overthrown*, yet that some judgment or other shall come upon it sufficient to save his credit; however, it is with great uneasiness that he waits the issue. He will not sojourn in a *house*, expecting it would fall upon his head, but he *makes him a booth* of the boughs of trees; and sits in that, tho' there he would lie exposed to wind and weather. Note, It is common for those that have fretful uneasy spirits, industriously to create inconveniences themselves, that

resolving

resolving to complain they may still have something to complain of.

2. God's gracious provision for his shelter and refreshment, when he thus foolishly afflicted himself, and was still adding yet more and more to his own affliction, *ver. 6.* Jonah was sitting in his booth, fretting at the cold of the night, and the heat of the day, which were both grievous to him, and God might have said it is his own choice, his own doing, a house of his own building, let him make the best of it; but he looked on him with compassion, as the tender mother doth on the froward child, and relieved him against the grievances which he by his own wilfulness created to himself.

He prepared a gourd, a plant with broad leaves, and full of them, that suddenly grew up and covered his hut, or booth, so as to keep off much of the injury of the cold and heat. It was a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief, that being refreshed in body, he might the better guard against the uneasiness of his mind, which outward crosses and troubles are often the occasion and increase of. See how tender God is of his people in their afflictions, yea, tho' they are foolish and froward, nor is he extreme to mark what they do amiss.

God had before prepared a great fish to secure Jonah from the injuries of the water, and here a great gourd to secure him from the injuries of the air, for he is the protector of his people against evils of every kind; has the command of plants as well as animals, and can soon prepare them to make them serve his purposes; can make their growth sudden, which in a course of nature is slow and gradual. A gourd one would think was but a slender fortification at the best, yet Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd; for,

(1.) It was really at that time a great comfort to him: A thing in itself small and inconsiderable, yet coming seasonably may be to us a very valuable blessing. A gourd in the right place, may do us more service than a cedar. The least creatures may be great plagues, (as flies and lice were to Pharaoh) or great comforts, as the gourd to Jonah, according as God is pleased to make them.

(2.) He being now much under the power of imagination, took a greater complacency in it than there was cause for. He was exceeding glad of it, was proud of it, and triumphed in it.

Note, Persons of strong passions, as they are apt to be cast down with a trifle that crosseth them, so they are apt to be lifted up with a trifle that pleaseth them. A small toy will serve sometimes to pacify a cross child, as the gourd did Jonah; but wisdom and grace would teach us both to weep for our troubles as though we wept not, and to rejoice in our comforts as though we rejoiced not. Creature-comforts we ought to enjoy, and be thankful for, but we need not be exceeding glad of them, it is God only that must be our exceeding joy, *Psal. xliii. 4.*

3. The sudden loss of this provision God had made for his refreshment, and the return of his trouble, *ver. 7, 8.* God that had provided comfort for him, provided also an affliction for him in that very thing which was his comfort; the affliction did not come by chance but by divine direction and appointment.

(1.) God prepared a worm, to wither the gourd. He that gave took away, and Jonah ought to have blessed his name in both; but because when he took the comfort of the gourd, he did not give God the praise of it, he deprived him of the benefit of it, and justly. See what all our creature-comforts are, and what we may expect them to be; they are gourds, have their root in the earth, are but a thin and slender defence compared with the rock of ages; they are withering things, they perish in the using, and we are soon deprived of the comfort of them. The gourd withered the next day after it sprung up; our comforts come forth like flowers and are soon cut down; when we please ourselves most with them, and promise ourselves most from them, we are disappointed. A little thing withers them, a small worm at the root destroys a large gourd. Something unseen and undiscerned doth it; our gourds wither and we know not what to attribute it to. And perhaps those wither first that we have been more exceeding glad of; that proves least safe that is most dear.

God did not send an angel to pluck up Jonah's gourd, but sent a worm to wither it; there it grew still, but it stood him in no stead: Perhaps our creature-comforts are continued to us, but they are embittered; the creature continued, but the comfort gone; and the remains or ruins of it rather do but upbraid us with our folly, in being exceeding glad of it.

(2.) He prepared a wind to make Jonah feel the want of the gourd, *ver. 8.* It was a vehement east-wind, which drove the heat of the rising sun, violently upon the head of Jonah. This wind was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as bellows to make it more intense. Thus poor Jonah lay open to sun and wind.

4. The further fret that this put Jonah into, *ver. 8.* he fainted, and wished in himself that he might die. If the gourd be killed, if the gourd be dead, kill me too, *Let me die with the gourd.* Foolish man that thinks his life bound up in the life of a weed!

Note, It is just that those who love to complain, should never be left without something to complain of, that their folly may

be manifested and corrected, and, if possible, cured. And see here how the passions that run into an extreme one way, commonly run into an extreme the other way; Jonah that was in transports of joy when the gourd flourished, is in pangs of grief when the gourd is withered: Inordinate affection lays a foundation for inordinate affliction; and what we are over-fond of when we have it, we are apt to over-grieve for when we lose it, and we may see our folly in both.

5. The rebuke God gave him for this; he again reasoned with him, *Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?* *ver. 9.* Note, The withering of a gourd is a thing which it doth not become us to be angry at; when afflicting providences deprive us of our relations, possessions, enjoyments, we must bear it patiently; must not be angry at God, must not be angry for the gourd; it is comparatively but a small loss, the loss of a shadow, that is the most we can make of it. It was a gourd, a withering thing, we could expect no other but that it should wither. Our being angry for the withering of it will not recover it, we ourselves shall shortly wither like it. If one gourd be withered, another gourd may spring up in the room of it; but that which should especially silence our discontent is, that tho' our gourd be gone, our God is not gone, and there is enough in him to make up all our losses.

Let us therefore own that we do ill, that we do very ill, to be angry for the gourd, and let us under such events quit ourselves as a child that is weaned from his mother.

6. His justification of his passion and discontent; and it is very strange, *ver. 9.* he said, *I do well to be angry even unto death.* It is bad to speak amiss, yet if it be in haste, if what is said amiss be presently recalled and unsaid again, it is the more excusable; but to speak amiss, and stand to it, is bad indeed. So Jonah did here, tho' God himself rebuked him, and by appealing to his conscience expected he should have rebuked himself.

See what brutish things ungoverned passions are, and how much it is our interest, and ought to be our endeavour, to chain up these roaring lions, and ranging bears. Sin and death are two very dreadful things, yet Jonah in his heat makes light of them both.

(1.) He has so little regard for God as to fly in the face of his authority, and to say he did well in that which God said was ill done. Passion often over-rules conscience, and forces it, when it is appealed to, to give a false judgment, as Jonah here did.

(2.) He has so little regard to himself as to abandon his own life, and to think it no harm to indulge his passion, even to death, to kill himself with fretting. We read of wrath that kills the foolish man, and envy that slays the silly one, *Job v. 2.* and foolish silly ones indeed they are that cut their own throats with their own passions, that fret themselves into consumptions and other weaknesses, and put themselves into fevers with their own intemperate heats.

7. The improvement of it against him for his conviction, that he did ill to murmur at the sparing of Nineveh. Out of his mouth God will judge him; and we have reason to think it overcame him; for he made no reply, but we hope returned to his right mind, and recovered his temper, tho' he could not keep it, and all was well.

Now let us see how God argued with him, *ver. 10, 11.* *Thou hast had pity on the gourd, hast spared it, (so the word is) didst what thou couldst, and wouldst have done more, to keep it alive, and saidst, What pity it is that this gourd should ever wither; and should not I then spare Nineveh?* Should not I have as much compassion upon that as thou hadst upon the gourd, and forbid the earthquake which would ruin that, as thou wouldst have forbidden the worm that withered the gourd? Consider,

(1.) The gourd thou hadst pity on was but one, but the inhabitants of Nineveh, I have pity on, are numerous; it is a great city, and very populous, as appears by the number of the infants, suppose from two years old and under, there are a hundred and twenty thousand such in Nineveh, that are not come to so much use of understanding, as to know their right hand from their left, for they are yet but babes.

These are taken notice of, because the age of infants is commonly looked upon as the age of innocency. So many there were in Nineveh that had not been guilty of any actual transgression, and consequently had not themselves contributed to the common guilt, and yet, if Nineveh be overthrown, will all be involved in the common calamity, and shall not I spare Nineveh then with an eye to them? God has a tender regard to little children; and is ready to pity and succour them, nay, here a whole city is spared for their sakes; which may encourage parents to present their children to God by faith and prayer, that tho' they are not capable of doing him any service, for they cannot discern between their right hand and their left, between good and evil, sin and duty, yet they are capable of participating of his favours, and of obtaining salvation.

The great Saviour discovered a particular kindness for the children that were brought to him, when he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, God took notice of the abundance of cattle too that were in Nineveh, which he had more reason to pity and spare than Jonah had to pity and to spare the gourd, in as much as the animal life is more excellent than the vegetable.

(2.) The gourd which Jonah was concerned for *was none of his own*, it was that for which he *did not labour*, nor *made it to grow*; but the persons in Nineveh, whom God had compassion on, were all the *work of his own hands*, whose beings he was the author of, whose lives he was the preserver of, whom he planted, and *made to grow*, he *made them*, and his they were, and therefore he had much more reason to have compassion on them, for he cannot *despise the work of his own hands*, Job x. 3. and thus Job there argues with him, *ver. 8; 9. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me, have made me as the clay, and wilt thou destroy me, wilt thou bring me into dust again?* and thus he here argues with himself.

(3.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on, was of a sudden growth, and therefore of less value, it *came up in a night*, it was the *son of a night*, (so the word is) but Nineveh is an ancient city, of many ages standing, and therefore cannot be so easily given up; the persons I spare have been *many years* in growing up, *not so soon reared as the gourd*, and shall not I then have pity on them, that have been so many years the care of my providence, so many years my tenants?

(4.) The gourd which Jonah had pity on *perished in a night*, it withered, and there was an end of it; but the precious souls in Nineveh, that God has pity on, are not so *short-lived*, they are *immortal*, and therefore to be carefully and tenderly considered. One soul is of more value than the whole world, and the gain of the world will not countervail the loss of it; surely then *one soul* is of more value than *many gourds*, of more value than *many sparrows*; so God *accounts*, and so should we, and therefore have a greater concern for the *children of men*, than for any of the *inferior creatures*, and for our own and others precious souls, than for any of the riches and enjoyments of this world.

From all this we may learn (1.) That tho' God may suffer his people to fall into sin, yet he will not suffer them to lie still in it, but will take a course effectually to shew them their error, and to bring them to themselves, and to their right mind again. We have reason to hope that Jonah after this was well reconciled to the sparing of Nineveh, and was as well pleased with it, as ever he had been *displeased*.

(2.) That God will *justify himself* in the methods of his grace towards repenting returning sinners, as well as in the course his justice takes with them that persist in their rebellion; tho' there be those that murmur at the mercy of God, because they do not understand it, for his thoughts and ways therein are as far above ours as heaven above the earth, yet he will make it evident that therein he acts like himself, and will be *justified when he speaks*. See what pains he takes with Jonah to convince him that it was very fit Nineveh should be spared; Jonah had said, *I do well to be angry*, but he could not prove it, God saith it, and proves it, *I do well to be merciful*; and it is a great encouragement to poor sinners to *hope* that they shall *find mercy* with him, that he is so ready to *justify himself* in shewing mercy, and to *triumph* in those whom he makes the monuments of it, against those whose *eye is evil*, because *his is good*. Such *murmurers* shall be made to *understand this doctrine*; that how *narrow* soever their souls, their principles, are, and how *willing* soever they are to *engross* divine grace to themselves, and those of their own way, there is one *Lord over all*, that is *rich in mercy to all that call upon him*, and in every nation, in Nineveh as well as in Israel, *He that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him*, he that repents and turns from his evil way shall find mercy with him.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f M I C A H.

We shall have some account of this prophet, in the first verse of the book of his prophecy; and therefore shall here only observe, That being cotemporary with the prophet Isaiah (only that he begun to prophesy a little after him) there is a near resemblance between that prophet's prophecy and this; and there is a prediction of the advancement and establishment of the gospel-church, which both of them have, almost in the same words, that out of the mouth of two such witnesses, so great a word might be established. Compare Isa. ii. 2, 3. with Mic. iv. 1, 2. Isaiah's prophecy is said to be concerning Judah and Jerusalem, but Micah's concerning Samaria and Jerusalem; for tho' this prophecy be dated only by the reigns of the kings of Judah, yet it refers to the kingdom of Israel, the approaching ruin of which, in the captivity of the ten tribes, he plainly foretels, and sadly laments. What we find here in writing, was but an abstract of the sermons he preached during the reign of three kings. The scope of the whole is, (1.) To convince sinners of their sins, by setting them in order before them, charging both Israel and Judah with idolatry, covetousness, oppression, contempt of the word of God; and their rulers especially, both in church and state, with the abuse of their power: and also by shewing them the judgments of God ready to break in upon them for their sins. (2.) To comfort God's people with promises of mercy and deliverance, especially with an assurance of the coming of the Messiah, and of the grace of the gospel thro' him. It is remarkable concerning this prophecy, and confirms its authority, that we find two quotations out of it, made publicly upon very solemn occasions, and both referring to very great events. (1.) One is, a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem, chap. iii. 12. which we find quoted in the Old Testament, by the elders of the land, Jer. xxvi. 17, 18. in justification of Jeremiah, when he foretold the judgments of God coming upon Jerusalem, and to stay the proceedings of the court against him. Micah (say they) foretold, that Zion should be plowed as a field, and Hezekiah did not put him to death, why then should we punish Jeremiah for saying the same? (2.) Another is, a prediction of the birth of Christ, chap. v. 2. which we find quoted in the New Testament, by the chief priests and scribes of the people, in answer to Herod's enquiry, where Christ should be born? Mat. ii. 5, 6. for still we find, that to him bear all the prophets witness.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, (1.) The title of the book, ver. 1. and a preface demanding attention, ver. 2. (2.) Warning given of desolating judgments, hastening upon the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, ver. 3, 4. and all for sin, ver. 5. (3.) The particulars of the destruction instanced in, ver. 6, 7. (4.) The greatness of the destruction illustrated, (1.) By the prophet's sorrow for it, ver. 8, 9. (2.) By the general sorrow that should be for it, in the several places that must expect to share in it, ver. 10—16. These prophecies of Micah, might well be called his lamentations.

1. **T**HE word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. 2. Hear all ye people, hearken, O earth, and all that therein is, and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. 3. For behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. 4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the vallies shall be cleft: as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. 5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob?

Jacob? *is it not Samaria?* and what *are the high places of Judah?* *are they not Jerusalem?* 6. Therefore I will make Samaria as an heap of the field, and as plantings of a vineyard; and I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley, and I will discover the foundations thereof. 7. And all the graven images thereof shall be beaten to pieces, and all the hires thereof shall be burnt with the fire, and all the idols thereof will I lay desolate: for she gathered *it* of the hire of an harlot, and they shall return to the hire of an harlot.

Here is, 1. A general account of this prophet and his prophecy, *ver. 1.* This is prefixed for the satisfaction of all that read and hear the prophecy of this book, who will give the more credit to it, when they know the author and his authority. (1.) The prophecy is the *word of the Lord*, it is a divine revelation. Note, What is written in the Bible, and what is preached by the ministers of Christ, according to what is written there, must be heard and received; not as the word of dying men, which we *may be judges of*, but as the word of the living God, which we *must be judged by*, for so it is. This word of the Lord *came to the prophet*, came *plainly*, came *powerfully*, came in a *preventing way*, and he *saw it*, saw the vision in which it was conveyed to him, *saw the things themselves* which he foretold, with as much clearness and certainty as if they had been already accomplished. (2.) The prophet is Micah the Morasthite; his name Micah a contraction of Micaiah, the name of a prophet, some ages before, in Ahab's time, 1 Kings xxii. 8. his surname, the Morasthite, born or lived at Moresteth, which is mentioned here, *ver. 14.* or Marestah, which is mentioned, *ver. 15.* and *Jesh. xv. 44.* The place of his abode is mentioned, that any one might enquire in that place, at that time, and might find there was, or had been, such a one there, who was generally reputed to be a prophet. (3.) The date of his prophecy is in the reigns of three kings of Judah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah: Ahaz was one of the worst of Judah's kings, and Hezekiah one of the best; such variety of times pass over God's ministers, times that *frown*, and times that *smile*, to each of which they must study to accommodate themselves, and to arm themselves against the temptations of both. The promises and threatenings of this book are *interwoven*, by which it appears, that even in the *wicked* reign he preached *comfort*, and said *to the righteous* then, it shall be *well with them*; and in the *pious* reign he preached conviction, and said to the wicked then, it shall be *ill with them*; for, however the times change, the word of the Lord is still the same. (4.) The parties concerned in this prophecy; it is concerning Samaria and Jerusalem, the head cities of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, under the influence of which the kingdoms themselves were. Tho' the ten tribes have deserted the houses both of David and Aaron, yet God is pleased to send prophets to them.

2. A very solemn introduction to the following prophecy, *ver. 2.* In which, (1.) The people are summoned to *draw near and give their attendances*, as upon a court of judicature, *hear all ye people.* Note, Where God has a mouth to speak, we must have an ear to hear; we *all must*; for we are all concerned in what is delivered. *Hear, ye people, all of them*, so the margin reads it; all ye that are now within hearing, and all others that hear it at second hand. It is an unusual construction; but those words with which Micah begins his prophecy, are the very same in the original, with those wherewith Micaiah ended his, 1 Kings xxii. 28. (2.) The earth is called upon, with *all that therein is*, to hear what the prophet has to say. *Hearken, O earth.* The earth shall be made to shake under the stroke and weight of the judgments coming; sooner will the earth hear, than this stupid, senseless, people; but God will be heard when he pleads. If the *church*, and those *in it*, will not hear, the *earth*, and those *in it*, shall, and shame them. (3.) God himself is appealed to, and his omniscience, power, and justice, are vouched in testimony against this people. *Let the Lord God be witness against you*; a witness that you had fair warning given you, that your prophets did their duty faithfully, as watchmen, but you would not take the warning; let the accomplishment of the prophecy be a witness against your contempt and disbelief of it, and prove to your conviction and confusion, that it was the word of God, and no word of his shall fall to the ground. Note, God himself will be a witness, by the judgments of his hand, against those that would not receive his testimony in the judgments of his mouth. He will be a witness *from his holy temple*, in heaven, when he comes down to execute judgment, *ver. 3.* against those that turned a deaf ear to his oracles, wherein he witnessed to them, out of his *holy temple* at Jerusalem.

3. A terrible prediction of destroying judgments, which should come upon Judah and Israel; which had its accomplishment soon after in Israel, and at length in Judah: for, it is foretold, (1.) That God himself will appear *against them*, *ver. 3.* They boast of themselves, and their relation to God, as if that would secure them; but, tho' God never deceives the faith of the up-

right, he will disappoint the presumption of the hypocrites, for *behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place*, quits his *mercy-seat*, where they thought they had him fast, and prepares his throne for judgment; his glory *departs*, for they *drive it from them*. God's way towards this people had long been a way of mercy, but now he changeth his way, he *comes out of his place*, and will *come down*. He had seemed to retire, as one regardless of what was done, but now he will *shew himself*, he will *rent the heavens* and will *come down*; not as sometimes in surprising mercies, but in surprising judgments to do things not for them, but against them, which they *looked not for*, Isa. lxiv. 1.—xxvi. 21. (2.) That when the Creator appears *against them*, it shall be in vain for any creature to appear *for them*. He will *tread with contempt and disdain upon the high places of the earth*, upon all the powers that are advanced in competition with him, or in opposition to him; and he will *so tread upon them*, as to tread them down, and level them. High places, set up for the worship of idols, or for military fortifications, shall all be trodden down, and trampled into the dust. Do men trust to the height and strength of the *mountains and rocks*, as if they were sufficient to *bear up* their hopes, and bear off their fears? They shall be *molten under him*, melted down *as wax before the fire*, Psal. lxxv. 2. Do they trust to the fruitfulness of the vallies, and their products? They shall be *cleft*, or rent, with those *fiery streams* that shall come pouring down from the mountains when they are melted: they shall be plowed, and waisted away, as the ground is by the waters that are *poured down a steep place*. God is said to *cleave the earth with the rivers*, Hab. iii. 9. Neither men of *high degree*, as the mountains, nor men of *low degree*, as the vallies, shall be able to secure either themselves or the land from the judgments of God, when they are sent with commission to lay all waste, and like a *sweeping rain to leave no food*, Prov. xxviii. 3. This is applied particularly to the head city of Israel, which they hoped would be a protection to the kingdom, *ver. 6.* I will make Samaria that is now a rich and populous city, as a *heap of the field*, as a heap of dung, laid there to be spread, or as a heap of stones, gathered together to be carried away, and, as *plantings of a vineyard*, as hillocks of earth raised to plant vines in: God will make of that city a *heap*, of that *defenced city*, a *ruin*, Isa. xxv. 2. Their *altars* had been as *heaps in the furrows of the fields*, Hof. xii. 11. and now *their houses* shall be so, as ruinous heaps. The *stones of the city* are *poured down into the valley* by the fury of the conqueror, who will thus be revenged on those walls that so long held out against him: They shall be quite pulled down, so that the very *foundations* shall be *discovered*, that had been covered by the superstructure; and not one stone shall be left upon another.

4. A charge of sin upon them, as the procuring cause of these desolating judgments, *ver. 5.* For the transgression of Jacob is all this. If it be asked, why God is so angry, and why Jacob and Israel are thus brought to ruin by his anger? The answer is ready, sin has done all the mischief, sin hath laid all waste; all the calamities of Jacob and Israel are owing to their transgressions; if they had not gone away from God, he had never appeared thus against them. Note, External privileges and professions, will not secure a sinful people from the judgments of God. If sin be found in the *house of Israel*, if Jacob be guilty of *transgression and rebellion*, God will not spare them; no, he will punish them first, for their sins are of all other most *provoking* to him, for they are most *reproaching*. But it is asked, *what is the transgression of Jacob?* Note, When we feel the smart of sin, it concerns us to enquire what the sin is we smart for, that we may particularly war against that, which wars against us. And what is it? (1.) It is *idolatry*, it is the *high-places*, that is the *transgression*, the great transgression which reigns in Israel, that is spiritual whoredom, the violation of the marriage-covenant, which merits a divorce: even the *high places of Judah*, tho' not so bad as the *transgression* of Jacob, yet offensive enough to God, and a remaining blemish upon some of the good reigns, *howbeit the high-places were not taken away*. (2.) It is the idolatry of Samaria and Jerusalem, the royal cities of those two kingdoms; those were the most *populous* places, and where there were most people, there was most wickedness, and they made one another worse; these were the most *pompous* places, there men lived most in wealth and pleasure, and they forgot God. These were the places that had the greatest influence upon the country, by authority and example; so that from them, idolatry and *profaneness* went forth throughout all the land, Jer. xxiii. 15. Note, Spiritual distempers are most *contagious*, in persons and places that are most *conspicuous*. If the head city of a kingdom, or the chief family in a parish, be vicious and profane, *many will follow their pernicious ways*, and write after an ill copy, when great ones set it them. The vices of leaders and rulers are leading, ruling, vices, and therefore shall be surely and sorely punished. Those have a great deal to answer for indeed, that not only sin, but *make Israel to sin*. Those must expect to be *made examples*, that have been examples of wickedness. If the *transgression* of Jacob is Samaria, therefore shall Samaria become a *heap*. Let ringleaders in sin, hear this and fear.

5. The punishment made to answer the sin, in the particular destruction of the idols, *ver. 7.* (1.) The gods they worshipped shall

shall be destroyed; the *graven images shall be beaten to pieces* by the army of the Assyrians, and all the *idols shall be laid desolate*. *Samar-ia and her idols* were ruined together by Sennacherib, *Isa. x. 11.* and *their gods cast into the fire*, for *they were no gods*, *Isa. xxxvii. 19.* and this was the Lord's doing. *I will lay the idols desolate*. Note, If the law of God prevail not, to make men in authority destroy idols, God will take the work into his own hands, and will do it himself. (2.) The gifts that passed between them and their gods shall be destroyed, for *all the hires thereof shall be burnt with fire*: which may be meant, either, of the presents they made to their idols, for the replenishing of their altars, and the adorning of their statues and temples, these shall become a prey to the victorious army, they shall rifle not only private houses, but the houses of their gods: or, of the corn, and wine, and oil, which they called the *rewards* or *hires* which *their idols*, their *lovers*, gave them, *Hos. ii. 12.* these shall be taken from them by him, whom (by ascribing them to their dear idols) they had defrauded of the honour due to him. Note, That cannot prosper, by which men either are hired to sin, or hire others to sin; for the *wages of sin* will be death. *She gathered it of the hire of the harlot, and it shall return to the hire of a harlot*. They enriched themselves by the leagues with the idolatrous nations, who gave them advantages, to court them into the service of their idols, and their idols temples were enriched with gifts, by those that went a whoring after them. And all this wealth shall become a prey to the idolatrous nations, and so be the *hire of an harlot* again; wages to an army of idolaters, which shall take it as a reward given them by their gods. *It shall be a present to king Jareb*, *Hos. x. 6.* What they gave to their idols, and what they thought they got by them, shall be as *the hire of a harlot*, i. e. the curse of God shall be upon it, and it shall never prosper, or do them any good. It is common, that what is squeezed out by one lust, is squandered away upon another.

8. Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stript and naked: I will make a wailing like the dragons, and mourning as the owls. 9. For her wound is incurable, for it is come unto Judah: he is come unto the gate of my people, *even to Jerusalem*. 10. ¶ Declare ye it not at Gath, weep ye not at all: in the house of Aphrah roll thy self in the dust. 11. Pass ye away, thou inhabitant of Saphir, having thy shame naked; the inhabitant of Zaanan came not forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel, he shall receive of you his standing. 12. For the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good; but evil came down from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem. 13. O thou inhabitant of Lachish, bind the chariot to the swift beast: she is the beginning of the sin to the daughter of Zion: for the transgressions of Israel were found in thee. 14. Therefore shalt thou give presents to Moresheth-gath: the houses of Achzib shall be a lye to the kings of Israel. 15. Yet will I bring an heir unto thee, O inhabitant of Maresah: he shall come unto Adullam the glory of Israel. 16. Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children, enlarge thy baldness as the eagle, for they are gone into captivity from thee.

We have here a long train of mourners, attending the funeral of a ruined kingdom.

1. The prophet is himself chief mourner, *ver. 8, 9.* *I will wail and howl, I will go stript and naked*, as a man distracted with grief. The prophets usually expressed their own grief for the publick grievances, partly to mollify the predictions of them, and to make it appear it was not out of ill will they denounced the judgments of God, so far were they from *desiring* the woful day, that they *dreaded* it more than any thing; partly to show how very dreadful and mournful the calamities would be, and to stir up in the people a holy fear of them, that by repentance they might turn away the wrath of God. Note, We ought to lament the punishments of sinners as well as the sufferings of saints in this world; the weeping prophet did so, *Jer. ix. 1.* so did this prophet, he *makes a wailing like the dragons*, or rather the *jack-alls*, ravenous beasts, that in those countries used to meet in the night, and *howl*, and make *hideous noises*; he mourns *as the owls*, the *screech-owls*, or *ostriches*, as some read it. Two things the prophet here thus dolefully laments. (1.) That Israel's case is desperate, *her wound is incurable*, it is ruin without remedy; man cannot help her, God will not, because she will not by repentance and reformation help herself. There is indeed balm in Gilead, and a physician there, but they will not apply themselves to the physician, nor apply the balm to themselves, and therefore *the wound is incurable*. (2.) That Judah likewise is in danger. The cup is going round, and is now put into Judah's hand, *the enemy is come to the gate of Jerusalem*; soon after the destruction of Samaria and the ten tribes, the Assyrian army, under Sennacherib, laid siege to Jerusalem, came to the gate, but could not force their way any further: however, it was with great concern and trouble, that the prophet foresaw the fright, so dearly did he love the peace of Jerusalem.

2. Other places are here brought in mourning, and are called upon to mourn; but with this proviso, that they should not let the Philistines hear them, *ver. 10.* *Declare it not in Gath*; this is borrowed from David's lamentation for Saul and Jonathan, *2 Sam. i. 20.* *Tell it not in Gath*, for the uncircumcised will triumph in Israel's tears. Note, One would not, if it could be helped, gratify those, that make themselves and their companions merry with the sins, or with the sorrows, of God's Israel. David was silent and stifled his griefs, when *the wicked were before him*, *Psal. xxxix. 1.* But, tho' it may be prudent not to give way to a noisy sorrow, yet it is duty to admit a silent one, when the church of God is in distress. *Roll thyself in the dust* as great mourners used to do, and so let the house of Judah, and every house in Jerusalem become a *house of Aphrah*, a *house of dust*; covered with dust, crumbled into dust; when God makes the house *dust*, it become us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, and to put our mouths in the dust. Thus accommodating ourselves to the providences that are concerning us. Dust we are, God brings us to the dust that we may know it, and own it.

Divers other places are here named, that should be sharers in this universal mourning; the names of some of which, we do not find elsewhere, whence it is conjectured, that they are names put upon them by the prophet, the signification of which, might either indicate or aggravate the miseries coming upon them: thereby to awaken this secure and stupid people to a holy fear of divine wrath. We find Sennacherib's invasion thus described in the prediction of it, by the impressions of terror it should make upon the several cities that fell in his way, *Isa. x. 28, 29, &c.* Let us observe the particulars here, (1.) The inhabitant of Saphir, which signifies neat and beautiful, (*Thou that dwellest fairly*, so the margin reads it) shall pass away into captivity, or be forced to flee, stripped of all her ornaments, and having thy shame naked. Note, Those who appear never so fine and delicate, know not what contempt they may be exposed to; and the more grievous will the shame be to those, that have been inhabitants of Saphir. (2.) The inhabitants of Zaanan, which signifies the country of flocks, a populous country, where the people are as numerous and thick as flocks of sheep, shall yet be so taken up with their own calamities, felt or feared, that they shall not come forth in the mourning of Beth-ezel, which signifies a place near, shall not condole with, or bring any succour to, their next neighbours in distress; for he shall receive of you his standing, the enemy shall encamp among you, O inhabitants of Zaanan, shall take up a station there, shall find footing among you. They may well think themselves excused from helping their neighbours, that find they have enough to do to help themselves, and to hold their own. (3.) As for the inhabitants of Maroth, which some think is put for Ramoth; others, that it signifies the rough places, they waited carefully for good, and were grieved for the want of it, but were disappointed; for evil came from the Lord, unto the gate of Jerusalem, when the Assyrian army besieged it, *ver. 12.* The inhabitants of Maroth might well overlook their own particular grievances, when they saw the holy city itself in danger; and might well overlook the Assyrian that was the instrument, when they saw the evil coming from the Lord. (4.) Lachish was a city of Judah, which Sennacherib laid siege to, *Isa. xxxvi. 1, 2.* The inhabitant of that city, is called to bind the chariot to the swift beast, to prepare for a speedy flight, as having no other way left to secure themselves and their families; or, it is spoken ironically, you have had your chariots and swift beasts, but where are they now? God's quarrel with Lachish is, that she is the beginning of the sin, probably the sin of idolatry, to the daughter of Zion, *ver. 13.* they had learned it from the ten tribes, their near neighbours, and so infected the two tribes with it. Note, Those that help to bring sin into a country, do but thereby prepare for the throwing of themselves out of it. They must expect to be first in the punishment, that have been ringleaders in sin. *The transgressions of Israel were found in thee*. i. e. when they came to be traced up to their original, they were found to take rise very much from that city. God knows at whose door to lay the blame of the transgressions of Israel, and whom to find guilty. Lachish having been so much accessory to the sin of Israel, shall certainly be reckoned with, *thou shalt give presents to Moresheth-gath*, a city of the Philistines, which, perhaps, had a dependence upon Gath, that famous Philistine city; thou shalt send to court those of that city to assist thee, but it shall be in vain, for, *ver. 14.* *the houses of Achzib* (a city which joined to Maresah or Moresheth, and is mentioned with it, *Josb. xv. 44.*) shall be a lye to the kings of Israel, tho' they depend upon their strength, yet they shall fail them; here there is an allusion to the name, *achzib* signifies a lie, and so it shall prove to those that trust in it. (5.) Maresah, that could not, or would not, help Israel, shall herself be made a prey, *ver. 15.* *I will bring an heir*, i. e. an enemy, that shall take possession of thy lands, with as much assurance as if he were heir at law to them, and he shall come to Adullam, and to the glory of Israel, i. e. to Jerusalem the head city; or, the glory of Israel shall come to be as Adullam, a poor despicable place: or, the king of Assyria, whom Israel had gloried in, shall come to Adullam in laying the country waste. (6.) The whole land of Judah seems to be spoken to, *ver. 16.* and called to weeping and mourning, *make thee bald*, by tearing thy hair, and shaving thy head, *poll thee* for

for thy delicate children, that had been tenderly and nicely brought up, enlarge thy baldness as the eagle when she casts her feathers, and is all over bald, for they are gone into captivity from thee, and are not likely to return; and their captivity will be the more grievous to them, because they have been brought up delicately, and have not been enured to hardship. Or, this is directed particularly to the inhabitants of *Marehab*, as *ver. 15*. That was the prophet's own city, and yet he denounceth the judgments of God against it, for it shall be an aggravation of its sin, that it had such a prophet, and knew not the day of its visitation. Its being thus privileged, since it improved not the privilege, shall not procure favour for it, either with God nor his prophet.

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have (1.) The sins with which the people of Israel are charged, covetousness and oppression, fraudulent and violent practices, *ver. 1, 2*. dealing barbarously, even with women and children, and other harmless people, *ver. 8, 9*. Opposition of God's prophets and silencing them, *ver. 6, 7*. and delighting in false prophets, *ver. 11*. (2.) The judgments with which they are threatened for those sins, that they should be humbled and impoverished, *ver. 3, 4, 5*. and banished, *ver. 10*. (3.) Gracious promises of comfort, reserved for the good people among them, in the Messiah, *ver. 12, 13*. And this is the sum and scope of most of the chapters, of this and other prophecies.

1. **W**O to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds: when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. 2. And they cover fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. 3. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks, neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is evil. 4. ¶ In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me? turning away, he hath divided our fields. 5. Therefore thou shalt have none that shall cast a cord by lot in the congregation of the LORD.

Here is, 1. The injustice of man contriving the evil of sin, *ver. 1, 2*. God was coming forth against this people to destroy them, and here he shews what was the ground of his controversy with them, it is that which is often mentioned as a sin, that hastens the ruin of nations and families, as much as any other, the sin of oppression. Let us see the steps of it, (1.) They eagerly desire that which is not their own, that is the root of bitterness; the root of all evil. *Ver. 2*. They covet fields and houses, as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard. O that such a one's field and house were mine! It lies convenient for me, and I would manage it better than he doth; it is fitter for me than for him. (2.) They set their wits on work, to invent ways of accomplishing their desire, *ver. 1*. they devise iniquity, with a great deal of cursed art and policy, they plot how to do it effectually, and yet so as not to expose themselves, or bring themselves into danger, or under reproach by it. This is called *working evil*; they are working it in their heads, in their families, and are as intent upon it, and with as much pleasure, as if they were doing it; and are as confident of their success (so wisely do they think they have laid the scheme) as if it were assuredly done. Note, It is bad to do mischief upon a sudden thought, but much worse to devise it, to do it with design and deliberation; when the craft and subtilty of the old serpent appears with his poison and venom, it is wickedness in perfection. They devised it upon their beds, when they should have been asleep, care to compass a mischievous design, held their eyes waking; upon their beds, where they should have been remembering God, and meditating upon him; where they should have been communing with their own hearts, and examining them, they were devising iniquity. It is of great consequence to us, how we improve and employ the hours of our retirement and solitude. (3.) They employ their power in executing what they have designed and contrived; they practise the iniquity they have devised, because it is in the power of their hand, they find they can compass it by the help of their wealth, and the authority and interest they have, and that none dare controul them, or call them to an account for it; and this

they think will justify them and bear them out in it. Note, It is the mistake of many, to think as they can do they may do; whereas no power is given for destruction, but all for edification. (4.) They are industrious and very expeditious, in accomplishing the iniquity they have devised; when they have settled the matter in their thoughts in their beds, they lose no time, but as soon as the morning is light, they practise it; are early up in the prosecution of their designs, and what ill their hand finds to do, they do it with all their might; which shames our slothfulness and dilatoriness in doing good, and should shame us out of it. In the service of God and our generation, let it never be said, we left that to be done to-morrow which we could do to day. (5.) They stick at nothing to compass their designs; what they covet they take away if they can, and (1.) They care not what wrong they do, though it be never so gross and open; they take away mens fields by violence; not only by fraud and underhand practices, and colour of law, but by force, and with a high hand. (2.) They care not whom they do wrong to, nor how far the iniquity extends which they devise; they oppress a man and his house, they rob and ruin those that have numerous families to maintain, and are not concerned, though they send them and their wives and children a begging. They oppress a man and his heritage; they take away from men, that which they have an unquestionable title to, having received it from their ancestors, and which they have but in trust, to transmit it to their posterity; but those oppressors care not how many they impoverish, so they may but enrich themselves. Note, If covetousness reigns in the heart, commonly all compassion is banished from it; and if any man love this world, as the love of the father, so the love of his neighbour is not in him.

2. The justice of God, contriving the evil of punishment for this sin, *ver. 3*. Therefore thus saith the Lord, the righteous God, that judgeth between man and man, and is an avenger on them that do wrong. Behold, against this family do I devise an evil, i. e. against the whole kingdom, the house of Israel, and particularly those families in it, that were cruel and oppressive: They unjustly devise evil against their brethren, and God will justly devise evil against them. Infinite wisdom will so contrive the punishment of their sin, as that it shall be very sure, and such as cannot be avoided, very severe, and such as they cannot bear, and very signal and remarkable, and such as shall be universally observed to answer the sin. The more there appears of a wicked wit in the sin, the more there shall appear of a holy wisdom and conduct in the punishment; for the Lord will be known by the judgments he executeth, he will be owned by them. (1.) He finds them very secure and confident, that they shall some way or other escape the judgment, or though they fall under it, shall soon throw it off and get clear of it, and therefore he tells them, it is an evil from which they shall not remove their neck. They were children of Belial, that would not endure the easy yoke of God's righteous commands, but broke those bonds asunder, and cast away those cords from them, and therefore God, will lay upon them the heavy yoke of his righteous judgments, and they shall not be able to withdraw their necks from that; those that will not be over-ruled, shall be overcome. (2.) He finds them very proud and stately, and therefore he tells them, they shall not go haughtily, with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, *Isa. x. 16*. for this time is evil, and the events of it were very humbling and mortifying, and such as will bring down the stoutest spirit. (3.) He found them very merry and jovial, and therefore tells them their note shall be changed, their laughter shall be turned into mourning, and their joy into heaviness, *ver. 4*. In that day, when God comes to punish you for your oppression, that one takes up a parable against you, and laments with a doleful lamentation, with a lamentation of lamentations, so the word is, a most lamentable lamentation: As a song of songs is a most pleasant song. Their enemies shall insult over them, and make a jest of their griefs, for they shall take up a parable against them. Their friends shall mourn over them, and lay to heart calamities, and this shall be the general cry, We be utterly spoiled, we are all undone. Note, They that were most haughty and secure in their prosperity, are commonly most dejected, and most ready to despair in their adversity. (4.) He found them very rich in houses and lands which they had gained by oppression, and therefore tells them they shall be stripped of all. (1.) They should in their despair give it all up, they shall say, We be utterly spoiled, he hath changed the portion of my people, so that it is now no longer theirs, but it is in the possession and occupation of their enemies; How hath he removed it from me! How suddenly, how powerfully: What is unjustly got by us, will not long continue with us, the righteous God will remove it. Turning away from us in wrath, he hath divided our fields, and given them into the hands of strangers. Wo to those from whom God turns away. The margin reads it, Instead of restoring, he hath divided our fields; instead of putting us again in the possession of our estates, he hath confirmed those in the possession of them, that have taken them from us. Note, It is just with God, that those who have dealt fraudulently and violently with others, should themselves be dealt fraudulently and violently with. (2.) God shall ratify what they say in their despair, *ver. 5*: so it shall be, Thou shalt have

have none to cast a cord by lot, in the congregation of the Lord; none to divide inheritances, because there shall be no inheritances to divide, no courts to try titles or lands, or determine controversies about them; or cast lots upon them as in Joshua's time, for all shall be in the enemies hand. This land which should be taken from them, they had not only an unquestionable title to, but a very comfortable enjoyment of, for it was in the congregation of the Lord, or rather, the congregation of the Lord was in it, it was God's land, it was a holy land, and therefore it was the more grievous to them to be turned out of it. Note, Those are to be the sore calamities, which cut us off from the congregation of the Lord, or cut us short in the enjoyment of the privileges of it.

6. Prophecy ye not, say they to them that prophecy: they shall not prophecy to them, that they shall not take shame. 7. ¶ O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? 8. Even of late my people is risen up as an enemy: ye pull off the robe with the garment from them that pass by securely, as men averse from war. 9. The women of my people have ye cast out from their pleasant houses, from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever. 10. Arise ye, and depart, for this is not your rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction. 11. If a man walking in the spirit and falsehood, do lie, saying, I will prophecy unto thee of wine, and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

Here are two sins charged upon the people of Israel, and judgments denounced against them for each, such judgments as exactly answer the sin; *persecuting God's prophets*, and *oppressing God's poor*.

1. *Persecuting God's prophets*, suppressing and silencing them, is a sin that provokes God as much as any other, for it not only spits in the face of his authority over us, but spurns at the bowels of his mercy to us; for his sending prophets to us, is a sure and valuable token of his good-will. Now observe here,

(1.) What the obstruction and opposition was, which this people gave to God's prophets. They said to them that prophecy, *prophecy ye not*, as, *Isa. xxx. 10.* they said to the seers *see not*; do not trouble us with accounts of what you have seen, nor bring us any such frightful messages; either they must not prophecy at all, or only what they please. The word for *prophesying*, here signifies *dropping*, for the words of the prophets dropped from heaven as the dew. Note, Those that hate to be reformed, hate to be reproved, and do all they can to silence faithful ministers. Amos was forbidden to prophecy, *Amos vii. 10, &c.* And therefore persecutors stop their breath, because they have no other way to stop their mouths, for if they live they will preach, and torment them that dwell on the earth, as the two witnesses did, *Rev. xi. 10.* Some read it, *Prophecy not, let these prophecy*; let not those prophecy that tell us of our faults, and threaten us, but let these prophecy that will flatter us in our sins, and cry peace to us. They will not say they will have no ministers at all, but they will have such as would say just what they would have them, and go their way. This they are charged with, *ver. 11.* that when they silenced and frowned upon the true prophets, they countenanced and encouraged pretenders, and set them up, and made an interest for them, to confront God's faithful prophets. If a man walk in the spirit of falsehood, pretend to have the Spirit of God, but really it is a spirit of error, a spirit of delusion, and he himself knows it, that he has no commission, no instruction, from God, yet if he saith, *I will prophecy unto thee of wine and strong drink*, if he will but assure them, that they shall have wine and strong drink enough, that they need not fear the judgments of war and famine, which the other prophets threatened them with, that they should always have plenty of the delights of sense, and never know the want of them: And if he will but tell them, that it is lawful for them to drink as much as they please of their wine and strong drink, and they need not scruple being drunk, that they shall have peace, tho' they go on and add drunkenness to thirst, such a prophet as this, is a man after their own heart, that will tell them, there is neither sin nor danger in that wicked course of life they lead, *He shall even be the prophet of this people*, i. e. Such a man they would have to be their prophet, that will not only associate himself with them in their rioting and revellings, but will pretend to consecrate it by his prophecies, and so harden them in their security and sensuality. Note, It is not strange if people that are vicious and debauched, covet to have ministers that are altogether such as themselves, for they are willing to believe God is so too, *Psal. l. 21.* But how are sacred things profaned, when they are prostituted to such base purposes! When prophecy itself,

shall be pressed into the services of a lewd and profane crew! But thus, that servant who said, *My Lord delays his coming*, by the spirit of falsehood, smote his fellow servants, and eat and drank with the drunken. (2.) How they are here expostulated with upon this matter, *ver. 7.* O thou that art named the house of Jacob, doth it become thee to say and do thus? Wilt thou silence them that prophecy, and forbid them to speak in God's name? Note, It is an honour and privilege to be named of the house of Jacob, thou art called a Jew, *Rom. ii. 17.* But when those who are called by that worthy name degenerate, they commonly prove the worst of men themselves, and the worst enemies to God's prophets. The Jews that were named of the house of Jacob, were the most violent persecutors of the first preachers of the gospel. Upon this the prophet here argues, with these opposers of the word of God, and shews them, (1.) What an affront they hereby put upon God, the God of the holy prophets; *Is the Lord's Spirit straitened?* In silencing the Lord's prophets, you do what you can to silence his Spirit too, but do you think you can do it? Can you make the Spirit of God your prisoner and your servant? Will you prescribe to him what he shall say, and forbid him to say what is displeasing to you? If you silence the prophets, yet cannot the Spirit of the Lord find out other ways to reach your consciences? Can your unbelief frustrate the divine counsels? (2.) What a scandal it was to their profession as Jews; you are named the house of Jacob, and it is your honour, but are these his doings? Are these the doings of your father Jacob? Do you herein tread in his steps? No, if you were indeed his children, you would do his works; but now ye seek to kill and silence a man that tells you the truth in God's name; *This did not Abraham*, *John viii. 39, 40.* This did not Jacob. Or, *Are these God's doings?* Are these doings that will please him; are these the doings of his people? No, you know they are not, however some may be so strangely blinded and bigotted as to kill God's ministers, and think that therein they do him service, *John xvi. 2.* (3.) Let them consider how unreasonable and absurd the thing was in itself; do not my words do good to them that walk uprightly? Yes, certainly they do; it is an appeal to the experiences of the generation of the upright; call now if there be any of them that will answer you, and to which of the saints will you turn? Turn to which you will, and you will find they all agree in this, that the word of God doth good to them that walk uprightly; and will you then oppose that which doth good, so much good as good preaching doth: herein you wrong God, who owns the words of the prophets to be his words, they are my words; and who by them aims and designs to do good to mankind, (*Psal. cxix. 68.*) And will you hinder the great benefactor from doing good, will you put the light of the world under a bushel? You had as good say to the sun, shine not, as say to the seers, see not. Herein you wrong the souls of men, and deprive them of the benefit, designed them by the word of God. Note, Those are enemies not only to God but to the world, they are enemies to their country, that silence good ministers, and obstruct the means of knowledge and grace, for it is certainly for the publick common good of states and kingdoms, that religion should be encouraged. God's words do good to them that walk uprightly; it is the character of good people, that they walk uprightly, *Psal. xv. 2.* And it is their comfort, that the words of God are good, and do good to them; they find comfort in them; God's words are good words to good people, and speak comfortably to them. But they that opposed the words of God, and prohibited the prophets, pleaded in justification of themselves, that God's words were unprofitable and unpleasant to them, and did them no good, nor prophesied any good concerning them, but evil, as Ahab complained of Micajah: in answer to which the prophet here tells them, that it was their own fault; they might thank themselves; they might find it of good use to them, if they were but disposed to make a good use of it; if they would but walk uprightly as they should, and so qualify themselves for comfort, the word of God would speak comfortably to them. Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.

3. What they are threatened with for this sin; God also will chose their delusions, and (1.) They shall be deprived of the benefit of a faithful ministry. Since they say, *Prophecy not*, God will take them at their word, and they shall not prophecy to them, their sin shall be their punishment; if men will silence God's ministers, it is just with God to silence them, as he did Ezekiel, and to say, they shall no more be reprovers, and monitors to them. Let the physician no longer attend the patient that will not be healed, for he will not be ruled. They shall not prophecy to them, and then they will not take shame. As it is the work of magistrates, so also of ministers, to put men to shame when they do amiss, *Judg. xviii. 7.* that being made ashamed of their folly, they may not return again to it: but when God gives men up to be impudent and shameless in sin, he saith to his prophets, *They are joined to idols, let them alone.* (2.) They shall be given up to the blind conduct of an unfaithful ministry. We may understand, *ver. 11.* as a threatening, *If a man be found walking in the spirit of falsehood*, having such a lying spirit, as was in the mouth of Ahab's prophets, that will strengthen their hands in their wicked ways, he shall be the prophet of this people, i. e.

i. 2. God will leave them to themselves to hearken to such; since they will be deceived, let them be deceived: since they will not admit the *truth* in the *love* of it, God will send them *strong delusions* to believe a *lie*, 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11. they shall have prophets that will prophesy to them for *wine and strong drink*, so some read it, that will give you a cast of their office to your mind, for a bottle of wine, or a flagon of ale; will sooth sinners up in their sins, if they will but feed them with the gratifications of their lusts; to have such prophets, and to be ridden by them, is as sad a judgment as any people can be under, and as ill a preface of ruin approaching, as it is to a particular person, to be under the influence of a debauched conscience.

2. *Oppressing God's poor* is another sin they are charged with, as before, ver. 1, 2. for it is a sin doubly hateful and provoking to God. Observe,

1. How the sin is described, ver. 8, 9. when they contemned God's prophets and opposed them, they broke out into all other wickedness; what bonds will hold those that have no reverence to God's word. They who formerly *rose up against* the enemies of the nation, in defence of their country, and therein behaved themselves bravely, now of late, *rose up as enemies of the nation*, and instead of defending it, destroyed it, and did it more mischief (as usually such vipers in the bowels of a state do) than a foreign enemy could do. They made a prey of men, women, and children. (1.) Of men, that were travelling on the way, that *pass by securely, as men averse from war*, that were far from any ill designs, but went peaceably about their lawful occasions, those they set upon, as if they had been dangerous, obnoxious people, and *pulled off the robe with the garment from them*, i. e. they stripped them both of the upper and inner garment, took away *their cloke*, and would have *their coat also*; thus barbarously did they use those that were *quiet in the land*: being harmless they were fearless, and so the more easily made a prey of. (2.) Of women whose sex should have been their protection, ver. 9. *The women of my people, have ye cast out from their pleasant houses, they devour widows houses*, Mat. xxiii. 14. and so turn them out of the possession of them, because they were *pleasant houses*, and such as they had a mind of. It was inhuman to deal thus barbarously with women, but that which especially aggravated it, was, that they were the women of *God's people*, whom they knew to be under his protection. (3.) Of children, whose age entitles them to a tender usage, *from their children have ye taken away my glory for ever*; it was the glory of the Israelites children that they were *free*, but they enslaved them; that they were born in God's house, and had a right to the privileges of it, but they sold them to strangers, sent them into idolatrous countries, where they were deprived for ever of *that glory*, at least the oppressors designed their captivity should be *perpetual*. Note, The righteous God will certainly reckon for injuries done to the widows and fatherless, who being helpless and friendless, cannot otherwise expect to be righted.

2. What the sentence is, that is passed upon them for it, ver. 11. *Arise ye, and depart*, prepare to quit this land, for you shall be forced out of it, as you have forced the *women and children of my people* out of their possessions, *it is not*, it shall not be, *your rest*, as it was intended Canaan should be, Psal. xcv. 11. You shall neither have contentment nor continuance in it, *because it is polluted* by your wickedness. Sin is defiling to a land, and sinners cannot expect to rest in a land which they have polluted, but it will spue them out, as this land spued out the Canaanites of old, when they had polluted it with their abominations, Lev. xviii. 27, 28. Nay, you shall not only be obliged to depart out of this land, but *it shall destroy you even with a sore destruction*; you shall either be turned out of it, or (which is all one) you shall be ruined in it. We may apply this to our state in this present world; it is *polluted*, there is a great deal of *corruption in the world thro' lust*, and therefore we should *arise and depart out of it*, keep at a distance from the corruption that is in it, and *keep ourselves unspotted* from it; it is *not our rest*, it was never intended to be so, it was designed for our passage, but not for our portion, our inn, but not our home; here *we have no continuing city*: let us therefore *arise and depart*, let us sit loose to it, and live above it, and think of leaving it, and seek a *continuing city* above.

12. ¶ I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee: I will surely gather the remnant of Israel, I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men. 13. The breaker is come up before them, they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it, and their king shall pass before them, and the LORD on the head of them.

After threatnings of wrath, the chapter here concludes as is usual in the prophets, with promises of mercy, which were in part fulfilled when the Jews returned out of Babylon, and had their full accomplishment in the kingdom of the Messiah. Their grievances shall be all redressed.

1. Whereas they were dispersed, they shall be brought together again, and shall jointly receive the tokens of God's favour to them, and shall have communion with each other, and comfort in each other, ver. 12. *I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee*, all that belong to thee, all that are named of the house of Jacob, ver. 7. that are now expelled your country, ver. 10. I will bring you together again, and not one of you shall be lost, not one of you shall be missing. *I will surely gather the remnant of Israel*, that remnant that is designed and reserved for salvation, they shall be brought to incorporate in one body, *I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah*. Sheep are inoffensive and sociable creatures, they shall be *as the flock in the midst of their fold*, their own fold, where they are safe under the shepherd's eye and care; and *they shall make great noise*, as numerous flocks and herds do, with their bleating and lowing, *by reason of the multitude of men* (for the sheep are men, as the prophet explains this comparison, Ezek. xxxiv. 31.) not by reason of their strifes and contentions, but by reason of their great numbers. This was accomplished, when Christ, by his gospel, gathered together in one, *all the children of God that were scattered abroad*, and united both Jews and Gentiles in *one fold*, and under one shepherd; when all the complaint was, that the *place was too strait* for them, that was *the noise, by reason of their multitude*, Isa. xlix. 19, 20. When there were some added to the church from all parts of the world, and all men were drawn to Christ by the attractive power of his cross, which shall be done yet more and more, and perfectly done, when he shall send forth his angels to *gather in his elect from the four winds*.

2. Whereas God had seemed to desert them, and cast them off, now he will own them, and head them, and help them through all the difficulties, that are in the way of their return and deliverance, ver. 13. *The breaker is come up before them*, to break down all opposition, and clear the road for them, and under his conduct *they have broken up, and have passed through the gate*, the door of escape out of their captivity, and are *gone out by it* with courage and resolution, having omnipotence for their vanguard, *their king shall pass before them*, to lead them the way, even Jehovah, (he is their king) *on the head of them*, as he was on the head of the armies of Israel, when they followed the pillar of cloud and fire through the wilderness; and when he appeared to Joshua, as *captain of the Lord's host*. Christ is the church's king; he is Jehovah; he heads them; passeth before them; brings them out of the land of their captivity, brings them into the land of their rest. He is the *breaker*, that broke in upon the powers of darkness, and broke through them; that rent the veil, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The learned bishop Pearson applies it to the resurrection of Christ, by which he obtained the power, and became the pattern of our resurrection. *The breaker is gone up before us* out of the grave, and has carried away its gates, as Sampson did Gaza's, bar and all, and by that breach we go out. The learned Dr Pocock mentions it, as the sense which some of the ancient Jews give of it, that the *breaker* is Elias, and their king the *Messiah*, the son of David; and he thinks we may apply it to Christ, and his forerunner *John the Baptist*; John was the *breaker*, he broke the ice, prepared the way of the Lord by the baptism of repentance, in him the gospel begun, from his time *the kingdom of heaven suffered violence*; and so the Christian church is introduced, with *Messiah the prince* before it, on the head of it, going forth *conquering and to conquer*.

C H A P. III.

What the apostle saith of another of the prophets, is true of this who was also his cotemporary. Esaias is very bold, Rom. x. 20. so in this chapter, Micah is very bold, in reproving and threatening the great men that were the ringleaders in sin; and he gives the reason, ver. 8. why he was so bold, because he had commission and instruction from God, to say what he said, and was carried out in it, by a higher spirit and power than his own. Magistracy and ministry are two great ordinances of God, for good to his church, but these were both corrupted, and the intentions of them perverted; and upon those that abused them, and so abused the church with them, the prophet is very severe, and justly so. (1.) He gives them their lesson severally, reproving and threatening oppressed princes, ver. 1—4. and false and flattering prophets, ver. 5—7. (2.) He gives them their lesson jointly, putting them together, as acting in conjunction for the ruin of the kingdom, which they should see the ruins of, ver. 9—12.

1. **A**ND I said, hear, I pray you, O heads of Jacob, and ye princes of the house of Israel; Is it not for you to know judgment?
2. Who hate the good, and love the evil, who pluck off

off their skin from off them, and their flesh from off their bones: 3. Who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and they break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. 4. Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. 5. ¶ Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, peace: and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. 6. Therefore night shall be unto you that ye shall not have a vision, and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine, and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. 7. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer of God.

Princes and prophets, when they faithfully discharge the duty of their office, are to be highly honoured above other men, but when they betray their trust, and act contrary to it, they should hear of their faults as well as others, and shall be made to know there is a God above them, to whom they are accountable; at his bar the prophet here in his name arraigns them.

1. Let the princes hear their charge, and their doom. The heads of Jacob, and the princes of the house of Israel, are called upon to hear what the prophet has to say to them, ver. 1. The word of God has reproofs for the greatest of men, which the ministers of that word ought to apply as there is occasion. The prophet here has comfort in the reflexion upon it, that whatever the success was, he had faithfully discharged his trust, *And I said, hear, O princes.* He had the testimony of his conscience for him, that he had not balked his duty for fear of the face of men. He tells them (1.) What was expected from them. *Is it not for you to know judgment?* i. e. to do judgment, for otherwise the knowledge of it is of no avail. Is it not your business to administer justice impartially, and not to know faces (as the Hebrew phrase is, for partiality and respect of persons) but to know judgment, and the merits of every cause. Or, it may be taken for granted, that the heads and rulers are well acquainted with the rules of justice, whatever others are; for they have these means of knowledge, and have not those excuses for ignorance which some others have that are poor and foolish, Jer. v. 4. and if so, their transgression of the laws of justice, is the more provoking to God, for they sin against knowledge. Is it not for you to know judgment? Yes, it is, therefore stand still and hear your own judgment, and judge if it be not right, whether any thing can be objected against it. (2.) How wretchedly they had transgressed the rules of judgment, though they knew what they were. Their principle and disposition is bad, they hate the good, and love the evil; they hate good in others, and hate it should have any influence on themselves, they hate to do good, hate to have any good done, and hate those that are good, and do good; and they love the evil, delight in mischief, and in those that do mischief. This being their principle, their practice was accordingly, they are very cruel and severe towards those that are under their power; and whoever lies at their mercy, will find that they have none. They barbarously devour those whom they should protect, and, as unfaithful shepherds, fleece the flock they should feed; nay, instead of feeding it, they feed upon it, Ezek. xxxiv. 2. It is fit indeed, that he who feedeth a flock, should eat of the milk of the flock, 1 Cor. ix. 7. but that will not content them, they eat the flesh of my people; it is fit they should be clothed with the wooll, but that will not serve, they flay the skin from off them, ver. 3. by imposing heavier taxes upon them than they could bear, and exacting them with rigour, by mulcts and fines, and corporal punishments, for pretended crimes, they ruined the estates and families of their subjects, took away from some their lives, from others their livelihoods, and were to their subjects as beasts of prey, rather than shepherds: They break their bones to come to the marrow, and chop the flesh in pieces as for the pot. This speaks them (1.) Very ravenous and greedy for themselves, indulging themselves in luxury and sensuality. (2.) Very barbarous and cruel to those that were under them, not caring whom they beggared, so they could but enrich themselves; such evil is the love of money the root of. (3.) How they might expect that God should deal with them, who had been thus cruel to his subjects; the rule is fixed, they shall have judgment without mercy, that have shewed no mercy, ver. 4. *They shall cry to the Lord, but he will not hear them,* in the day of their distress, as the poor cried to them in the day of their prosperity, and they would not hear them. There will come a time, when the most proud and scornful sinners will cry to the Lord, and sue for that mercy, which when time was, they neither valued nor copied out; but it will then be in vain, God will even hide

his face from them at that time, that time when they need his favour, and see themselves undone without it. At another time they would have turned their back upon him, but at that time he will turn his back upon them, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. Note, Men cannot expect to do ill, and fare well, but may expect to find, as Adonibezek did, that done to them which they did to others, for he is righteous who taketh vengeance, with the froward God will shew himself froward, and often gives up cruel, unmerciful men, into the hands of those who are cruel and unmerciful to them, as themselves have formerly been to others. This agrees with Prov. xxi. 13. *Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself and shall not be heard,* but the merciful have reason to hope that they shall obtain mercy.

2. Let the prophets hear their charge too, and their doom, they were such as prophesied falsely, and the princes bare rule by their means. Observe,

1. What was their sin, (1.) They made it all their business to flatter and deceive the people; *they make my people err*, lead them into mistakes, both concerning what they should do, and concerning what God would do with them; it is ill with a people, when their leaders cause them to err, and these draw them out of the way, that should guide them, and go before them in it. They make them to err by crying peace, by telling them that they do well, and that all shall be well with them, whereas they are in the paths of sin, and within a step of ruin. They cry peace, but they bite with their teeth, which perhaps is meant of their biting their own lips, as we use to do, when we would suppress something which we are ready to speak; when they cried peace, their own hearts gave them the lye, and they were just ready to eat their own words, and to contradict themselves, but they bit with their teeth, and kept it in: They were not blind leaders of the blind, for they saw the ditch before them, and yet led their followers into it. (2.) They made it all their aim to glut themselves, and serve their own belly, as the seducers in St Paul's time, Rom. xvi. 18. *for their god is their belly*, Phil. iii. 19. They bite with their teeth and cry peace, i. e. they will flatter and compliment those that will feed them with good bits, will give them something to eat; but as for those that put not into their mouths, that are not continually cramming them, they look upon them as their enemies, to them they do not cry peace, as they do to those whom they look upon as their benefactors, but they even prepare war against them; against them they denounce the judgments of God; they preach either comfort or terror to men not according as they are to God, but as they are to them; as the crafty priests of the church of Rome, in some places, make their image either to smile or frown upon the offerer, according as his offering is. Justly is it insisted on, as a necessary qualification of a minister, 1 Tim. iii. 3. and again, Tit. i. 7. that he be not greedy of filthy lucre.

2. What is the sentence passed upon them for this sin, ver. 6, 7. It is threatened, (1.) That they shall be involved in troubles and miseries with those, to whom they had cried peace. *Night shall be upon them*, a dark cold night of calamity; such as they flattered people with hope should never come. *It shall be dark unto you*, darker to you than others; *the sun shall go down over the prophets*, shall go down at noon; all comfort shall depart from them, and they shall be deprived of all hope of it: *The day shall be dark over them*, in which they promised themselves light. Nor shall they only be surrounded with outward troubles, but their minds shall be full of confusion, and they shall be brought to their wit's end; their heads shall be muddled and clouded, and their own thoughts shall trouble them; and that is trouble enough: They kept others in the dark, and now God will bring them into the dark. (2.) That thereby they shall be silenced, and all their pretensions to prophecy for ever shamed. They never had any true vision, and now the event disproving their predictions of peace, it shall be made to appear that they never had any; that there never was an answer of God to them, but it was all a sham, and they were cheats and impostors. Their reputation being thus quite sunk, their confidence would of course fail them. And their spirits being ruffled and confused, their invention would fail them too; and by reason of this darkness, both without and within too, *they shall not divine*, they shall not have so much as a counterfeit vision to produce, they shall be ashamed and confounded, and cover their lips, as men that are quite baffled, and have nothing to say for themselves. Note, Those who deceive others, are but preparing confusion for their own faces.

8 ¶ But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. 9. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. 10. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof

thereof divine for money : yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, *Is not the LORD among us ? none evil can come upon us.* 12. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Here, 1. The prophet *experienceth* a divine power going along with him in his work, and he makes a solemn profession and protestation of it, as that which would justify him and bear him out, in his plain dealing with the princes and rulers : He would not, he durst not make thus bold with the great men, but that he was carried out to do it, by a prophetic impulse and impression : It was not he that said it, but God by him, and he could not but speak the word that God put into his mouth. It comes in likewise by way of opposition to the false prophets who were full of shame, when they lived to see themselves proved liars, and who never had courage to deal faithfully with the people, but flattered them in their sins ; they were *sensual, not having of the Spirit*, but truly (saith Micah) *I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord*, ver. 8. Having in himself an assurance of the truth of what he said, he said it with assurance. Compare him with those false prophets, and you will say, there is no comparison between them, *what is the chaff to the wheat ?* Jer. xxiii. 28. What is painted fire to real fire ? Observe here, (1.) What the qualifications were with which this prophet was endued ; he was *full of power, and of judgment, and of might* : he had an ardent love to God, and to the souls of men, a deep concern for his glory and their salvation, and a flaming zeal against sin. He had likewise courage to reprove it, and witness against it, not fearing the wrath either of great men or of great multitudes ; whatever difficulties or discouragements he met with, they did not deter him, or drive him from his work, none of these things *moved him* ; and all this was guided by judgment and discretion, he was a man of conduct as well as courage ; in all his preaching there was *light* as well as *heat*, and a spirit of wisdom as well as zeal : thus was this man of God *thoroughly furnished* for every good word he had to say, and every good work he had to do. And those he preached to could not but perceive him full both of power and judgment, for they found both their *understandings opened*, and their *hearts made to burn within them*, with such evidence and demonstration, and such power, did the word come from him. (2.) Whence he had these qualifications, not from and of himself, but he was *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord*. Knowing that it was indeed the Spirit of the Lord that was in him, and spoke by him, that it was a divine revelation that he delivered, he spoke it boldly, and as one having authority, *set his face as a flint*, knowing he should be justified and born out in what he said, Isa. l. 7, 8. Note, Those that act honestly, may act boldly ; and those that are sure they have a commission from God, need not be afraid of opposition from men. Nay, he had not only a Spirit of prophecy, which was the ground of his boldness, but the Spirit of sanctification endued him with that boldness and wisdom which was requisite for him. It was not in any strength of his own, that he was strong, for *who is sufficient for these things ?* But in the Lord, and in the power of his might, for *from him all our sufficiency is*. Are we full of power at any time, for that which is good ? it is purely by the Spirit of the Lord, for of ourselves we are weak as water ; it is the God of Israel that gives strength and power, both to his people and to his ministers. (3.) What use he made of these qualifications, this judgment and this power, he declared to Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. If transgression be found in Jacob and Israel, they must be told of it, and it is the business of God's prophets to tell them of it ; to cry aloud and not to spare, Isa. lviii. 1. Those that come to hear the word of God, must be willing to be told of their faults, and must not only give their ministers leave to deal plainly and faithfully with them, but take it kindly and be thankful ; but because few have meekness enough to receive reproof, those have need of a great deal of boldness that are to give reproofs, and must pray for a Spirit both of wisdom and might.

2. The prophet exerts this power, in dealing with the heads of the house of Jacob, both the princes and the prophets, whom he had drawn up a high charge against in the former part of the chapter. He repeats the summons of their attendance and attention, ver. 9. the same that we had, ver. 1. directing himself to the princes of the house of Israel, yet he means those of Judah ; for it appears Jer. xxvi. 18, 19. (where ver. 12. is quoted) that this was spoken in Hezekiah's kingdom ; but the ten tribes being gone into captivity, Judah is all that is now left of Jacob and Israel. The prophet speaks respectfully to them, *Hear, I pray you*, and gives them their titles of heads and princes : Ministers must be faithful to great men, in reproving them for their sins, but they must not be rude and uncivil to them. Now observe here,

1. The great wickedness that these heads of the house of Jacob were guilty of, *princes, priests, and prophets* ; in short, they were covetous, and prostituted their offices to their love of money. (1.) The princes *abhorred all judgment*, they would not be governed by any of its laws, either in their own practice, or in

passing sentence upon appeals made to them : They *perverted all equity*, and scorned to be under the direction or correction of justice, when it could not be made pliable to their secular interests. When under pretence of doing right, they did the most palpable wrongs, then they *perverted equity*, and made it serve a purpose contrary to the intention of the founder of magistracy, and fountain of power. It is laid to their charge, ver. 10. that *they build up Zion with blood*. They pretend in justification of their extortion and oppressions, that they *built up Zion* and Jerusalem, they add new streets and squares to the holy cities, and adorn them ; they establish and advance the publick interests both in church and state, and think therein they do God and Israel good service. But it is *with blood*, and *with iniquity*, and therefore it cannot prosper ; nor will their intentions of good to the city of God, justify their contradictions to the law of God. They mistake, that think a burning flaming zeal for holy church, and the propagating of the faith, will serve to consecrate robberies and murders, massacres and depredations ; no, Zion's walls owe those no thanks, that build them up with blood and iniquity. The sin of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The office of the princes, is to judge upon appeals made to them, but they *judge for reward*, ver. 11. they give judgment on their side that give the bribe ; the most righteous cause shall not be carried without a fee, and for a fee the most unrighteous cause shall be carried. Miserable is the peoples case, when the judges enquire upon a cause is not what is to be done in it, but what is to be got by it ? (2.) The priests work was to teach the people, and for that the law had provided them a very honourable, comfortable maintenance, but that will not content them, they *teach for hire* over and above, and will be hired to teach any thing as an oracle of God, which they know will please and gain them an interest. (3.) The prophets, it should seem, had honorary fees given them, by way of gratuity, 1 Sam. ix. 7, 8. But these prophets govern themselves in their prophesying, by the prospect of temporal advantage, and that was the main thing they had in their eye : they *divine for money*, their tongues were mercenary, they would either prophesy or let it alone, according as they found was most for their advantage ; and a man might have what oracle he would from them, if he would but pay them for it ; the successors of Balaam who *loved the wages of unrighteousness*. Note, Tho' that which is wicked can never be consecrated by a zeal for the church, yet that which is sacred may be, and often is defecrated by the love of the world. When men do that which in itself is good, but do it for *filthy lucre*, it loses its excellency, and becomes an abomination both to God and man.

2. Their vain presumption and carnal confidence notwithstanding, they *lean upon the Lord*, and because they are in profession his people, they think there is neither harm nor danger in these wicked practices of theirs. Faith *builds upon the Lord*, rests in him, and relies upon him, as the soul's foundations : presumption only *leans upon the Lord* as a prop, makes use of him to serve a turn, while still the world is the foundation that is built upon. They speak with a great deal of confidence, (1.) Of their honour, *Is not the Lord among us*, have we not the tokens of his presence with us, his temple, his ark, his lively oracles ? they are *haughty because of the holy mountain*, and the dignities of that, Zeph. iii. 11. as if their church privileges would palliate the worst of practices ; or, as if God's presence with them, were intended to make the priests and people rich, with the sale of their performances. It was true that the Lord *was among them* by his ordinances, and this puffed them up with pride, but if they imagined that he was among them by his favour and love, they were mistaken ; but it is a cheat the children of men often put upon themselves, to think they have God with them, when they have by their sin provoked him to depart from them. (2.) They are confident of their own safety, *no evil can come upon us*. Many are rocked asleep in a fatal security by their church privileges, as if those would protect them in sin, and shelter them from punishment, which are really, and will be, the greatest aggravations both of their sin and of their punishment. If men having the Lord among them will not restrain them from doing evil, it can never secure them from suffering evil for so doing ; and it is very absurd for sinners to think that their impudence will be their impunity.

3. The doom passed upon them for their real wickedness, notwithstanding their imaginary protection, ver. 12. *Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field*. This is that passage which is quoted as a bold word spoken by Micah, Jer. xxvi. 18. which yet Hezekiah and his princes took well, tho' in another reign it might have gone near to cost him his head ; nay they repented, and reformed, and so the execution of this threatening was prevented, and did not come in those days. (1.) It is the ruin of holy places that is here foretold, places that had been highly honoured with the tokens of God's presence, and the performances of his worship ; it is Zion that shall be *plowed as a field*, the building burnt to the ground, and levelled with it. Some observe that this was literally fulfilled, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, when the ground was plowed up on which the city stood, in token of its utter desolation, and that no city should be built upon that ground without the Emperor's leave. Even

Even Jerusalem the holy city, shall become heaps of ruins, and the mountain of the house on which the temple is built, shall be overgrown with briars and thorns, as the high places of the forest. If sacred places be polluted by sin, they must expect to be wasted and ruined by the judgments of God. (2.) It is the wickedness of those who preside in them, that brings the ruin: it is for your sake that Zion shall be plowed as a field; you pretend to build up Zion, but doing it by blood and iniquity, you pull it down. Note, The sin of priests and princes, is often the ruin of states and churches. *Delirant reges, plectuntur Achivi.*

C H A P. IV.

Comparing this chapter with the close of the foregoing chapter, the comfortable promises here, with the terrible threatenings there, we may with the apostle behold the goodness and severity of God, Rom. xi. 22. towards the Jewish church, which fell, severity, when Zion was plowed as a field, but towards the Christian church which was built upon the ruins of it, goodness, great goodness; for it is here promised, (1.) That it shall be advanced and enlarged, by the accession of the nations to it, ver. 1, 2. (2.) That it shall be protected in tranquillity and peace, ver. 3, 4. (3.) That it shall be kept close, and constant, and faithful to God, ver. 5. (4.) That under Christ's government all its grievances should be redressed, ver. 6, 7. (5.) That it shall have an ample and flourishing dominion, ver. 8. (6.) That its troubles should be brought to a happy issue at length, ver. 9, 10. (7.) That its enemies should be disquieted, nay, that they should be destroyed in, and by, their attempts against it, ver. 11—13.

1. **B**UT in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. 2. And many nations shall come and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3. ¶ And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off, and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. 4. But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. 5. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever. 6. In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; 7. And I will make her that halted, a remnant, and her that was cast far off, a strong nation; and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion, from henceforth even for ever.

It is a very comfortable but with which this chapter begins, and very reviving to those, who lay the interests of God's church near their heart, and are concerned for the welfare of it. When we sometimes see the corruptions of the church, especially of church rulers; princes, priests, and prophets, seeking their own things, and not the things of God: and when we soon after see the desolations of the church, Zion for their sakes plowed as a field, we are ready to fear it will one day perish between both, that the name of Israel shall be no more in remembrance; are ready to give up all for gone, and to conclude the church will have neither root nor branch upon earth; but let not our faith fail in this matter; out of the ashes of the church another phoenix shall arise. In the last words of the foregoing chapter, we left the mountain of the house, as desolate and waste as the high places of the forest, and is it possible that such a wilderness should ever become a fruitful field again? Yes, the first words of this chapter, bring in the mountain of the Lord's house as much dignified by being frequented, as ever it had been disgraced by being deserted. Tho' Zion be plowed as a field, yet God has not cast off his people, but by the fall of the Jews, salvation is come to the Gentiles, so that it proves to be the riches of the world, Rom. xi. 11, 12. This is the mystery which God by the prophet here shews us, and he saith the very same in the

three first verses of this chapter, which another prophet said by the word of the Lord at the same time, Isa. ii. 2, 3, 4. that out of the mouth of these two witnesses these promises might be established; and very precious promises they are, relating to the gospel church, which have been in part accomplished; and will be yet more and more, for he is faithful that has promised.

1. That there shall be a church for God set up in the world, after the defection and destruction of the Jewish church, and this in the last days, that is, as some of the rabbins themselves acknowledge, in the days of the Messiah. The people of God shall be incorporated by a new charter, a new spiritual way of worship shall be enacted, and a new institution of offices to attend it; better privileges shall be granted by this new charter, and better provision made for the enlarging and establishing the kingdom of God among men, than had been made by the Old Testament constitution. The mountain of the house of the Lord shall again appear firm ground for God's faithful worshippers to stand, and go and build upon, in their attendance on him, ver. 1. And it shall be a center of unity to them, a church shall be set up in the world, to which the Lord will be daily adding such as shall be saved.

2. That this church shall be firmly founded, and well built, it shall be established in the top of the mountains; Christ himself will build it upon a rock, it shall be an impregnable fort, upon an immovable foundation, so that the gates of hell shall neither overthrow the one, nor undermine the other, Mat. xvi. 18. its foundations are still in the holy mountains, Psal. lxxxvii. 1. the everlasting mountains, which cannot, which shall not, be removed. It shall be established, not as the temple, upon one mountain, but upon many, for the foundations of the church as they are sure, so they are large.

3. That it shall be highly advanced, and become eminent and conspicuous; it shall be exalted above the hills, observed with wonder, for its growing greatness from small beginnings; the kingdom of Christ shall shine with greater lustre, than ever any of the kingdoms of the earth did. It shall be as a city on a hill which cannot be hid, Mat. v. 14. The glory of this latter house, is greater than that of the former, Hag. ii. 9. See 2 Cor. iii. 7, 8, &c.

4. That there shall be a great accession of converts to it, and succession of converts in it. People shall flow unto it, as the waters of a river are continually flowing, there shall be a constant stream of believers flowing in from all parts into the church, as the people of the Jews flowed into the temple while it was standing, to worship there. Then many tribes came to the mountain of the house, to enquire of God's temple: but in gospel times, many nations shall flow into the church, shall fly like a cloud, and as the doves to their windows; for ministers shall be sent forth to disciple all nations, and they shall not labour in vain; for multitudes being wrought upon to believe the gospel, and embrace the Christian religion, they shall excite and encourage one another, and shall say, come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, now raised among us, even to the house of the God of Jacob, the spiritual temple which we need not travel far to, for it is brought to our doors, and set up in the midst of us. Thus shall people be made willing in the day of his power, Psal. cx. 3. and shall do what they can to make others willing, as Andrew invited Peter, and Philip Nathaniel, to be acquainted with Christ. They shall call the people to the mountain, Deut. xxxiii. 19. for there is in Christ enough for all, enough for each. Now observe what it is, (1.) Which these converts expect to find in the house of the God of Jacob, they come thither for instruction, he will teach us of his ways, what is the way in which he would have us to walk with him, and in which we may depend upon him to meet us graciously. Note, Where we come to worship God, we come to be taught of him. (2.) Which they engage to do when they are thus taught of God, we will walk in his paths. Note, Those may comfortably expect that God will teach them who are firmly resolved by his grace to do as they are taught.

5. That in order to this, a new relation shall be published to the world, on which the church should be founded, and by which multitudes should be brought into it, for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The gospel is here called the word of the Lord, for the Lord gave the word, and great was the company of them that published it, Psal. lxxviii. 11. It was of a divine original, a divine authority, it begun to be spoken by the Lord Christ himself, Heb. ii. 3. And it is a law, a law of faith, we are under the law to Christ; this was to go forth from Jerusalem, from Zion, the metropolis of the Old Testament dispensation, where the temple and altars, and oracles were, and whither the Jews went to worship from all parts, thence the gospel must take rise, to shew the connexion between the Old Testament and the New, that the gospel is not set up in opposition to the law, but is an explication and illustration of it, and a branch growing out of its roots. It was in Jerusalem that Christ preached and wrought miracles, there he died, rose again, and ascended, there the Spirit was poured out, and those that were to preach repentance and remission of sins to all nations, were ordered to begin at Jerusalem, so that thence flowed the streams that were to water the desert world.

6. That

6. That a convincing power should go along with the gospel of Christ, in all places where it should be preached, *ver. 3.* *He shall judge among many people*; Messiah the lawgiver, *ver. 2.* is here the judge, for to him the Father committed all judgment, and for judgment he came into this world; his word, the word of his gospel, that was to go forth from Jerusalem, was the golden sceptre by which he shall rule and judge, when he sits as king on the holy hill of Zion, *Psal. ii. 6.* By it he shall rebuke strong nations afar off, for the Spirit working with the word, shall reprove the world, *John xvi. 8.* It is promised to the son of David, that he shall judge among the heathen, *Psal. cx. 6.* which he doth when in the chariot of his everlasting gospel, he goes forth and goes on, conquering, and to conquer.

7. That a disposition to mutual peace and love, should be the happy effect of the setting up of the kingdom of the Messiah. *They shall beat their swords into plow-shares*, i. e. angry passionate men, that have been fierce and furious, shall be wonderfully sweetened and made mild and meek, *Tit. iii. 2, 3.* They that before their conversion did injuries, and would bear none, after their conversion can bear injuries, but will do none. As far as the gospel prevails it makes men peaceable, for such is the wisdom from above, it is gentle and easy to be entreated. And if nations were but leavened by it, there would be an universal peace. When Christ was born, there was an universal peace in the Roman empire; those that were first brought into the gospel church, are all of one heart and of one soul, *Heb. iv. 32.* And it was observed of the primitive Christians, how well they loved one another: in heaven this will have its full accomplishment. It is promised (1.) That none shall be quarrelsome; the art of war instead of being improved, (which some reckon the glory of a kingdom) shall be forgotten, and laid aside as useless, they shall not learn war any more as they had done, for they shall have no need to defend themselves; nor any inclination to offend their neighbours. *Nation shall no longer lift up sword against nation*, not that the gospel will make men cowards, but it will make men peaceable. (2.) That all shall be quiet, both from evil, and from the fear of evil, *ver. 4.* *They shall sit safely*, and none shall disturb them, they shall sit securely and shall not disturb themselves, every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, enjoying the fruit of them, and needing no other shelter but the leaves of them. *None shall make them afraid*, not only there shall be nothing that is likely to frighten them, but they shall not be disposed to fear; under the dominion of Christ as that of Solomon, there shall be abundance of peace. Tho' his followers have trouble in the world, in him they enjoy great tranquillity. If this seems unlikely, yet we may depend upon it, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, and no word of his shall fall to the ground; what he hath spoken by his word, he will do by his providence and grace. He that is the Lord of hosts, will be the God of peace, and those may well be easy whom the Lord of hosts, of all hosts, undertakes the protection of.

8. That the churches shall be constant in their duty, and so shall make a good use of their tranquillity, and shall not provoke the Lord to deprive them of it, *ver. 5.* When the churches have rest they shall be edified, and confirmed, and comforted, and shall resolve to be as firm to their God, as other nations are to theirs, tho' they be no gods. Where we find the foregoing promises, *Isa. iii. 2, &c.* it follows, *ver. 5.* *O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord*, and here, *we will walk in the name of the Lord our God.* Note, Then peace is a blessing indeed, when it strengthens our resolutions to cleave to the Lord. Observe, (1.) How constant other nations were to their gods; *all people will walk every one in the name of his god*, will own their god and cleave to him, will worship their god and serve him, will depend upon him, and put a confidence in him. Whatever men make a god of, they will make use of, and take his name along with them in all their actions and affairs. The mariners in a storm cried every man to his god, *Jon. i. 5.* And no instance could be found of a nations changing their gods, *Jer. ii. 11.* If the hosts of heaven were their gods, they loved them, and served them, and walked after them, *Jer. viii. 6.* (2.) How constant God's people now resolve to be to him. *We will walk in the name of the Lord our God*, will acknowledge him in all our ways, and govern ourselves by a continual regard to him, doing nothing but what we have warrant from him for, and openly professing our relation to him. Observe, Their resolution is peremptory, it is not a thing that needs be disputed, *We will walk in the name of the Lord our God*; it is just and reasonable, he is our God, and it is a resolution for a perpetuity, we will do it for ever and ever, and will never leave him. He will be ours for ever, and therefore so we will be his, and never repent our choice.

9. That notwithstanding the dispersions, distress, and infirmities of the church, it shall be formed and established, and made very considerable, *ver. 6, 7.* (1.) The state of the church had been low, and weak, and very helpless, in the latter times of the Old Testament, partly through the corruptions of the Jewish nation, and partly through the oppressions under which they groaned: They were like a flock of sheep, that were maimed, worried, and scattered, *Ezek. xxxiv. 16.* *Jer. i. 6, 17.* The good people among them, and in other places that were well inclined,

were dispersed, were very infirm, and in a manner lost, and cast far off. (2.) It is promised that all these grievances shall be redressed, and the distemper healed. Christ will come himself, *Matth. xv. 24.* and send his apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, *Matth. x. 6.* From among the Jews that halted, or that for want of strength could not go upright, God gathered a remnant, (*ver. 7.*) that remnant according to the election of grace, which is spoken of in *Rom. xi. 7.* which embraced the gospel of Christ. And from among the Gentiles that were cast far off, (so the Gentiles are described to be, *Eph. ii. 13.* *Acts ii. 39.*) he raised a strong nation, greater numbers of them were brought into the church than of the Jews, *Gal. iv. 27.* And such a strong nation the gospel church is, that the gates of hell shall never be able to prevail against it. The church of Christ is more numerous than any other nation, and strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

10. That the Messiah should be the king of this kingdom, shall protect and govern it, and order all the affairs of it for the best, and this to the end of time. The Lord Jesus shall reign over them in mount Zion, by his word and Spirit in his ordinances, and this from henceforth and for ever, for of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.

8. ¶ And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion, the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem. 9. Now why dost thou cry out aloud? is there no king in thee? is thy counsellor perished? for pangs have taken thee as a woman in travail. 10. Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon, there shalt thou be delivered: there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. 11. ¶ Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. 12. But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor. 13. Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass, and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.

These verses concern Zion and Jerusalem, here called the tower of the flock, or, the tower of Edar, we read of such a place, *Gen. xxxv. 21.* near Bethlehem, and some conjecture, it is the same place where the shepherds were keeping their flocks, when the angels brought them tidings of the birth of Christ, and some think, Bethlehem itself is here spoken of, as *chap. v. 2.* Some think it is a tower, at that gate of Jerusalem which is called the sheep-gate, *Neh. iii. 32.* and conjecture, that thro' that gate Christ rode in triumph into Jerusalem. However, it seems to be put for Jerusalem itself, or for Zion, the tower of David, all the sheep of Israel flocked thither three times a year; it was the strong hold (Ophel, which is also a name of a place in Jerusalem, *Neh. iii. 27.*) or castle of the daughter of Zion. Now here,

1. We have a promise of the glories of the spiritual Jerusalem, the gospel church which is the tower of the flock, that one fold, in which all the sheep of Christ are protected under one shepherd; unto thee shall it come, that which thou hast long wanted and wished for, even the first dominion, a dignity and power equal to that of David and Solomon, by whom Jerusalem was first raised; that kingdom shall again come to the daughter of Jerusalem, which it was deprived of at the captivity. It shall make as great a figure, and shine with as much lustre among the nations, and have as much influence upon them as ever it had; this is the first or chief dominion; now this had by no means its accomplishment in Zerubbabel, his was nothing like the first dominion, either in respect of splendor and sovereignty at home, or the extent of power abroad, and therefore it must refer to the kingdom of the Messiah (and to that the Chaldee paraphrase refers it) and had its accomplishment, when God gave to our Lord Jesus the throne of his father David, *Luke i. 32.* set him king upon the holy hill of Zion, and gave him the heathen for his inheritance, *Psal. x. 6.* made him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth, *Psal. lxxxix. 27.* *Dan. vii. 14.* David in spirit called him Lord, and (as Dr Pocock observes) he witnessed of himself, and his witness was true, that he was greater than Solomon, none of their dominions being like his for extent and duration: The common people welcomed Christ into Jerusalem with hosannas to the Son of David, to shew that it was the first dominion that came to the daughter of Zion, and the evangelist applies it to the promise of Zion's king coming to her, *Matth. xxi. 5.* *Zech. ix. 9.* Some give this sense of the words, to Zion and Jerusalem that tower of the flock

stock, to the nation of the Jews, *came the first dominion*, i. e. there the kingdom of Christ was first set up, the *gospel of the kingdom* was first preached, Luke xxiv. 47. there Christ was first called *King of the Jews*.

2. This is illustrated by a prediction of the calamities of the literal Jerusalem, to which some favour and relief should be granted, as a type and figure of what God would do for the gospel Jerusalem in the last days, notwithstanding its distresses. We have here,

1. Jerusalem put in pain, by the providences of God; she *cries out aloud*, that all her neighbours may take notice of her griefs: because there is *no king in her*, none of that honour and power she used to have; instead of ruling the nations, as she did when she *sat a queen*, she is ruled by them, and become a captive; her *counsellors are perished*, she is no longer at her own dispose, but is given up to the will of her enemies, and is governed by their counsellors; *Pangs have taken her*, (1.) She is carried captive to Babylon, and there is in *pangs of grief*, she *goes forth out of the city*, and is constrained to *dwell in the field*, exposed to all manner of inconveniencies, she *goes even to Babylon*, and there wears out seventy tedious years in a miserable captivity, all that while *in pain, as a woman in travail*, waiting to be delivered, and thinking the time very long. (2.) When she is delivered out of Babylon, and redeemed from the hand of her enemies there, yet still she is in *pangs of fear*, the end of one trouble is but the beginning of another; for *now also*, when Jerusalem is in the rebuilding, *many nations are gathered against her*, ver. 11. they were so in Ezra's and Nehemiah's time, and did all they could to obstruct the building of the temple and the wall; they were so in the time of the Maccabees, they said, *Let her be defiled*, let her be looked upon as a place polluted with sin, and be forsaken and abandoned both of God and man; let her holy places be *profaned*, and all her honours laid in the dust; *let our eye look upon Zion*, and *please itself* with the sight of its ruins, as it is said of Edom, *Obad. 12. Thou shouldest not have looked upon the day of thy brother*; let our eyes see our desire upon Zion, the day we have long wished for. When they hear the enemies thus combine against them, and insult over them, no wonder that they are *in pain*, and cry aloud; *Without are fightings, within are fears*.

2. Jerusalem made easy by the promises of God; *Why dost thou cry out aloud?* Let thy griefs and fears be silenced, indulge not thyself in them, for though things are bad with thee, they shall *end well*; thy pangs are great, but they are like those of a *woman in travail*, ver. 9. that *labours to bring forth*, ver. 11. the issue of which will be good at last; Jerusalem's pangs are not as *dying agonies*, but as *travailing throws*, which after a while will be forgotten, for joy that a child is born into the world. Let the literal Jerusalem comfort herself with this, that whatever straits she may be reduced to, she shall continue until the coming of the Messiah, for there his kingdom must be first set up; and she shall not be destroyed while that blessing is in her, and when at length she is plowed as a field, and become *heaps*, as is threatened, *chap. iii. 12.* yet her privileges shall be *resigned* to the spiritual Jerusalem, and in that, the promises made to her, shall be fulfilled. Let Jerusalem be easy then, for,

1. Her captivity in Babylon shall have an end, a happy end, *ver. 10. There shalt thou be delivered, and the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies there*; this was done by Cyrus, who acted therein as God's servant: and that deliverance was typical of our redemption by Jesus Christ, and the release from our spiritual bondage, which is proclaimed in the everlasting gospel, that *acceptable year of the Lord*, in which Christ himself preached *liberty to the captives*, and the *opening of the prison to them that were bound*, Luke iv. 18, 19.

2. The designs of her enemies against her afterwards, shall be baffled, nay they shall turn upon themselves, *ver. 12, 13.* They promise themselves a day of it, but it shall prove *God's day*. They are *gathered against Zion* to destroy it, but it shall prove to their own destruction, which Israel and his God shall have the glory of. (1.) Their coming together against Zion, shall be the occasion of their ruin. They *associate themselves and gird themselves*, that they may break Jerusalem in pieces, but it will prove that they shall be *broken in pieces*, Isa. viii. 9. They *know not the thoughts of the Lord*; when they are gathering together, and providence favours them in it, they little think, what God is designing by it, nor do they *understand his counsel*; they know what they aim at in coming together, but they know not what God aims at in bringing them together; they aim at Zion's ruin, but God aims at *theirs*. Note, When men are made use of as instruments of providence, in accomplishing its purposes, it is very common for them to intend one thing, and God intend the quite contrary. The king of Assyria is to be a rod in God's hand, for the correction of his people, in order to their reformation, *howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so*, Isa. x. 7. And thus it is here; the nations are gathered against Zion, as soldiers into the field, but God *gathers them as sheaves into the floor*, to be beaten to pieces; and they could not have been so easily, so effectually destroyed, if they had not *gathered together against Zion*. Note, The designs of enemies for the ruin of the church, often prove ruining to themselves; and thereby they prepare themselves for destruction, and put themselves in the way

of it, they are *snared in the work of their own hands*. (2.) Zion shall have the honour of being victorious over them, *ver. 13.* when they are *gathered as sheaves into the floor*, to be trodden down, as the corn then was by the oxen, then *arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion*, instead of fearing them and fleeing from them, boldly set upon them, and take the opportunity providence favours thee with, of trampling upon them. Plead not thine own weakness, and that thou art not a match for so many confederated enemies, God will make *thy horn iron*, to push them down, and *thy hoofs brass*, to tread upon them when they are down; and thus thou shalt *beat in pieces many people*, that have long been beating thee in pieces. Thus when God pleaseth, *the daughter of Babylon is made a threshing floor*, it is time to *thresh her*, Jer. li. 33. and the *worm Jacob* is made a *threshing instrument*, with which God will *thresh the mountains*, and make them as *chaff*, Isa. xli. 14, 15. How strangely, how happily are the tables turned, since Jacob was the *threshing floor*, and Babylon the *threshing instrument*! Isa. xxi. 10. Note, When God has conquering work for his people to do, he will furnish them with strength and ability for it, will make the *horn iron* and the *hoofs brass*; and when he doth so, they must exert the power he gives them, and execute the commission, even the daughter of Zion must *arise and thresh*. (3.) The glory of the victory shall redound to God: Zion shall *thresh these sheaves in the floor*, but the corn threshed out, shall be a meat-offering at God's altar, *I will consecrate their gain unto the Lord*, (i. e. I will have it consecrated) and *their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth*; the spoils gained by Zion's victory, shall be brought into the sanctuary, and devoted to God, either in part, as those of Midian, *Num. xxxi. 28.* or in whole, as those of Jericho, *Josh. vi. 17.* God is Jehovah, the fountain of being, he is the *Lord of the whole earth*, the fountain of power; and therefore *needs not any* of our gain or substance, but may *challenge and demand it all* if he pleaseth; and with ourselves, we must devote all we have to his honour, to be employed as he directs: Thus far all we have must have *holiness to the Lord* written upon it, all our *gain and substance*, must be *consecrated to the Lord of the whole earth*, Isa. xxiii. 18. And extraordinary successes call for extraordinary acknowledgments, whether they be of spoils in war, or gains in trade. It is God that *gives us power to get wealth*, which way soever it is honestly got, and therefore he must be *honoured with what we get*. Some make all this to point at the defeat of Sennacherib when he besieged Jerusalem, others to the destruction of Babylon, others to the successes of the Maccabees; but the learned Dr Pocock, and others think it had its full accomplishment in the spiritual victories obtained by the gospel of Christ over the powers of darkness that fought against it. The *nations* thought to have ruined christianity in its infancy, but it was *victorious* over them; those that persisted in their enmity, were *broken to pieces*, Matth. xxi. 44. particularly the Jewish nation: but multitudes by divine grace were *gained to the church*; and they and *their substance* were consecrated to the Lord Jesus, the *Lord of the whole earth*.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter we have, (1.) *A prediction of the troubles and distresses of the Jewish nation*, ver. 1. (2.) *A promise of the Messiah, and of his kingdom, to support the people of God in the day of these troubles*. (1.) *Of the birth of the Messiah*, ver. 2, 3. (2.) *Of his advancement*, ver. 4. (3.) *Of his protection of his people, and his victory over his and their enemies*, ver. 5, 6. (4.) *Of the great increase of the church, and the blessings that shall come to the world by it*, ver. 7. (5.) *Of the destruction of the enemies of the church, both those without, that attack it, and those within, that expose it*, ver. 8—15.

1. **N**OW gather thy self in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2. But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. 3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel. 4. ¶ And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God, and they shall abide: for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

5. And this *man* shall be the peace when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men. 6. And they shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof: thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian, when he cometh into our land, and when he treadeth within our borders.

Here, as before, we have,

1. The abasement and distress of Zion, *ver. 1.* The Jewish nation for many years before the captivity, dwindled, and fell into disgrace: now *gather thy self in troops, O daughter of troops.* It is either a *summons* to Zion's enemies, that had troops at their service, to come and *do their worst* against her, God will suffer them to do it; or a *challenge* to Zion's friends that had troops too at command, to come and *do their best* for her, let them *gather in troops*, yet it should be to no purpose; for faith the prophet in the name of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *he hath laid siege against us.* The king of Assyria has, the king of Babylon has, and we know not which way to defend ourselves; so that the enemies shall gain their point, and prevail, so far as to *smite the judge of Israel*, the king, the chief justice, and the other inferior judges *with a rod upon the cheek*, in contempt of them and their dignity; having made them prisoners they shall use them as shamefully as any of the common captives. Complaint had been made of the judges of Israel, *chap. iii. 12.* that they were corrupt and took bribes, and this disgrace came justly upon them, for abusing their power; yet it was a great calamity to Israel, to have their judges treated thus ignominiously. Some make this the reason, why the troops shall lay siege to Jerusalem, that is, the Roman army, because the Jews shall *smite the judge of Israel upon the cheek*, because of the indignities they shall do to the Messiah, the judge of Israel, whom they smote on the cheek, saying *prophecy, who smote thee.* But the former sense seems more probable, and that it is meant of the besieging of Jerusalem, not by the Romans but the Chaldeans, and was fulfilled in the indignities done to king Zedekiah and the princes of the house of David.

2. The advancement of Zion's king; having shewed how low the house of David should be brought, and how vilely the shield of that mighty family should be cast away, as tho' it had not been anointed with oil; to encourage the faith of God's people, who might be tempted now to think, that his covenant with David and his house was abrogated, according to the psalmist's complaint, *Psal. lxxxix. 38, 39.* He adds an illustrious prediction of the Messiah and his kingdom, in whom that covenant should be established, and the honours of that house should be revived, advanced, and perpetuated. Now let us see,

1. How the Messiah is here described; it is he that is to be ruler in Israel, *whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, from the days of eternity,* as the word is. Where we have, (1.) His existence from eternity as God: his *goings forth* or *emanations*, as the going forth of the beams from the sun, were, or have been of old, *from everlasting*; which (saith Dr Pocock) is so signal a description of Christ's eternal generation, or his going forth as the Son of God, begotten of his father before all worlds, that this prophecy must belong only to him, and could never be verified of any other. It certainly speaks of a *going forth* that was now past, when the prophet spoke, and cannot but be read as we read it, his *out-goings have been*; and the putting of both these words together, which severally are used to denote eternity, plainly shew that they must here be taken in the strictest sense, the same with, *Psal. xc. 2. from everlasting to everlasting thou art God*; and can be applied to no other, but to him who was able to say, *Before Abraham was, I am,* John viii. 58. Dr Pocock observes, that the *going forth* is used, *Deut. viii. 3.* for a *Word*, which *proceedeth out of the mouth*, and is therefore very fitly used to signify the eternal generation of him who is called the *word of God*, that was *in the beginning with God*, John i. 1, 2. (2.) His office as mediator; he was to be ruler in Israel, king of his church, he was to *reign over the house of Jacob for ever*, Luke i. 32, 33. The Jews object, that our Lord Jesus could not be the Messiah, for he was so far from being ruler in Israel, that Israel ruled over him, and put him to death, and would not have him to reign over them; but he answered that himself, when he said his *kingdom was not of this world*, John xviii. 36. And it is a spiritual Israel that he reigns over, the children of promise, all the followers of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob; in the hearts of these he reigns by his Spirit and grace; and in the society of these by his word and ordinances. And was not he ruler in Israel, whom winds and seas obeyed, and legions of devils were forced to truckle to? And who commanded away diseases from the sick, and called the dead out of their graves? None but he whose *goings forth were from of old, from everlasting*, was fit to be ruler in Israel, to be head of the church, and head over all things to the church.

2. What is here foretold concerning him.

1. That Bethlehem should be the place of his nativity, *ver. 2.* This was the scripture which the Scribes went upon, when with the greatest assurance they told Herod, *where Christ should be born*, Mat. ii. 6. and from hence it was universally known among the Jews, that *Christ comes out of the town of Bethlehem where David was*, John vii. 42. Beth-lehem signifies *the house of bread*, the fittest place for him to be born in, who is *the bread of life*: And because it was *the city of David*, by a special providence it was ordered that he should be born there, who was to be the *son of David*, and his *heir and successor* for ever. It is called Bethlehem Ephratah, both names of the same city, as appears, *Gen. xxxv. 19.* It was *little among the thousands* of Judah, not considerable either for the number of the inhabitants, or the figure they made; it had nothing in it worthy to have this honour put upon it: but God in that, as other instances, chose to *exalt them of low degree*, Luke i. 52. Christ would give honour to the place of his birth, and not derive honour from it; tho' thou be *little*, yet this shall make thee *great*; and as St Matthew reads it, *thou art not the least among the princes of Judah*, but upon this account art really honourable above any of them. A relation to Christ, will magnify those that are *little in the world*.

2. That in the *fulness of time* he should be *born of a woman*, *ver. 3.* *Therefore will he give them up*, he will give up his people Israel to distress and trouble, and will defer their salvation, which has been so long promised and expected, *until the time*, the set time, *that she which travaileth has brought forth*, or, as it should be read, *that she who shall bring forth, shall have brought forth*, that the blessed virgin, who was to be the mother of the Messiah, shall have brought him forth, at Bethlehem, the place appointed. This Dr Pocock thinks to be the most proper genuine sense of the words. Tho' the out-goings of the Messiah were *from everlasting*, yet the *redemption in Jerusalem*, the *consolation of Israel*, must be waited for, Luke ii. 25, 38. until the time, *that she who should bring forth* (so the Virgin Mary is called, as Christ is himself called, *He that should come*) shall bring forth; and in the mean time he will give them up. Divine salvations must be waited for, until the time fixed for the bringing of them forth.

3. That *the remnant of his brethren shall then return to the children of Israel*: the remnant of the Jewish nation shall return to the spirit of the true genuine children of Israel, a people in covenant with God; the hearts of the *children* shall be turned to the *fathers*, Mal. iv. 6. Some understand it of all believers, Gentiles as well as Jews, they shall all be incorporated into the common-wealth of Israel; and as they are all brethren to one another, *so he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11.

4. That he shall be a glorious prince, and his subjects shall be happy under his government, *ver. 4.* *He shall stand and feed*, i. e. he shall both *teach and rule*, and shall *continue* to do so, as a good shepherd, with wisdom, and care, and love: so it was foretold, *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd*, shall provide green pastures for them, and under-shepherds to lead them into these pastures. He is the *good shepherd* that goes before the sheep, and presides among them. He shall do this, not as an ordinary man, but in the *strength of the Lord*, as one clothed with a divine power, to go through his work, and break through the difficulties in his way, so as not to fail, or be discouraged; he shall do it in the *majesty of the name of the Lord his God*, i. e. so as plainly to evidence that *God's name was in him*, Exod. xxiii. 21. the *majesty of his name*, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes. The prophets prefaced their messages, with, *Thus saith the Lord*, but Christ spoke not as a servant, but as a son, *Verily, verily, I say unto you*; this was feeding in the *majesty of the name of the Lord his God*; all power was given him in heaven and in earth, a power over all flesh, by virtue of which, he still rules in the *majesty of the name of the Lord his God*, a name above every name. Christ's government shall be, (1.) Very happy for his subjects, for they shall abide; they shall be safe and easy, and continue so for ever, *because he lives, they shall live also*: they shall lie down in the green pastures, to which he shall lead them: *shall abide in God's tabernacle for ever*, Psal. lxi. 4. His church shall abide, and he in it, and with it always, even to the end of the world. (2.) It shall be very glorious to himself; *now shall he be great to the ends of the earth*. Now he stands and feeds his flock, *now shall he be great*. For Christ reckons it his greatness to do good. Now he shall be great to the ends of the earth, for the uttermost parts of the earth shall be given him for his possession, and the ends of the world shall see his salvation.

5. That he shall secure the peace and welfare of his church and people, against all the attempts of his and their enemies, *ver. 5, 6.* *This man as king and ruler, shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.* This refers to the deliverance of Hezekiah and his kingdom from the power of Sennacherib, who invaded them, in the type; but under the shadow of that is a promise of the safety of the gospel-church, and of all believers, from the designs and attempts of the powers of darkness, Satan and all his instruments, the dragon and his angels, that seek to devour the church of the first-born, and all that belong to it. Observe, (1.) The *peril and danger* which Christ's subjects

subjects are supposed to be in, the Assyrian, a potent enemy, comes into their land, ver. 5, 6. treads within their borders, nay prevails so far as to tread in their palaces; it was a time of treading down and of perplexity: when Sennacherib made a descent upon Judah, took all the defended cities, and laid siege to Jerusalem, *Isa. xxxvi. 1. xxxvii. 3.* This represented the gates of hell fighting against the kingdom of Christ, compassing the camp of the saints and the holy city, and threatening to bear down all before them. When the terrors of the law, set themselves in array against a convinced soul, when the temptations of Satan assault the people of God, and the troubles of the world threaten to rob them of all their comforts, then the Assyrian comes into their land, and treads in their palaces; without are fightings, within are fears. (2.) The protection and defence which his subjects are then sure to be under; (1.) Christ will himself be their peace. When the Assyrian comes with such a force into a land, can there be any other peace than a tame submission and an unresisted desolation? Yes, even then, the church's king will be the conservator of the church's peace, will be for a hiding place, *Isa. xxxiii. 1, 2.* Christ is our peace as a priest, making atonement for sin, and reconciling us to God, and he is our peace as a king, conquering our enemies, and commanding down disquieting fears and passions; he creates the fruit of the lips, peace. Even when the Assyrian comes into the land, when we are in the greatest distress and danger, and have received a sentence of death within ourselves, yet this man may be the peace; in me, saith Christ, you shall have peace, when in the world you have tribulation; at such a time our souls may dwell at ease in him. (2.) He will find out proper instruments to be employed for their protection and deliverance, and the defeat of their enemies. Then shall we raise against him seven shepherds and eight principal men, i. e. a competent number of persons, proper to oppose the enemy, and make head against him, and protect the church of God in peace; men that shall have the care and tenderness of shepherds, and the courage and authority of principal men, or, princes of men. Seven and eight is a certain number for an uncertain. Note, When God has work to do, he will not want fitting instruments to do it with; and when he pleaseth he can do it by a few; he needs not raise thousands, but seven or eight principal men may serve the turn, if God be with them. Magistrates and ministers are shepherds and principal men, raised in defence of religion's righteous cause, against the powers of sin and Satan in the world. (3.) The opposition given to the church shall be got over, and the opposers brought down. This is represented by the laying of Assyria and Chaldea waste, which two nations were the most formidable enemies to the Israel of God, of any other; and the destruction of them, signified the making of Christ's enemies his footstool. They shall waste the land of Assyria with the sword, and the land of Nimrod in the entrances thereof, they shall make inroads upon the land, and put all to the sword that they find in arms. Note, Those that threaten ruin to the church of God, hasten ruin to themselves. And their destruction is the church's salvation; thus shall he deliver us from the Assyrian. When Satan fell as lightning from heaven before the preaching of the gospel, and Christ's enemies that would not have him to reign over them, were slain before him, then this was fulfilled.

7. And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people, as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men. 8. ¶ And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep: who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver. 9. Thine hand shall be lift up upon their adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off. 10. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that I will cut off thy horses out of the midst of thee, and I will destroy thy chariots: 11. And I will cut off the cities of thy land, and throw down all thy strong holds: 12. And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand, and thou shalt have no more soothsayers. 13. Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee, and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands. 14. And I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee: so will I destroy thy cities. 15. And I will execute vengeance in anger, and fury upon the heathen, such as they have not heard.

Glorious things are here spoken of the remnant of Jacob; that remnant which was raised of her that halted, chap. iv. 7. And it seems to be that remnant which the Lord our God shall call, *Joel ii. 32.* on whom the Spirit shall be poured out; the remnant

that shall be saved, *Rom. ix. 27.* Note, God's people are but a remnant, a small number, in comparison with the many that are left to perish: a little flock; but they are the remnant of Jacob, a people in covenant with God; and in his favour.

Now concerning this remnant it is here promised,

1. That they shall be as a dew in the midst of the nations, ver. 7. God's church is dispersed all the world over; it is in the midst of many people, as gold in the ore, wheat in the heap: Israel according to the flesh, dwelt alone, and was not numbered among the nations; but the spiritual Israel lies scattered in the midst of many people, as the salt of the earth, or as seed sown in the ground, here a grain and there a grain, *Hos. ii. 23.* Now this remnant shall be as dew from the Lord, (1.) They shall be of a heavenly extraction, as dew from the Lord, who is the father of the rain, and hath begotten the drops of the dew, *Job xxxviii. 28.* They are born from above, and are not of the earth, favouring the things of the earth. (2.) They shall be numerous, as the drops of dew in a summer's morning, *Psal. cx. 3.* Thou hast the dew of thy youth. (3.) They shall be pure and clear, not muddy and corrupt, but chrysal drops, as the water of life. (4.) They shall be produced silently and without noise, as the dew that distils insensibly, we know not how; such is the way of the Spirit. (5.) They shall live in a continual dependence upon God, and be still deriving from him, as the dew, which tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men; they should not rely upon human aids and powers, but on divine grace; for they are, and own that they are, no more than what the free grace of God makes them, every day. (6.) They shall be great blessings to those among whom they live, as the dew and the showers are to the grass, to make it grow without the help of man, or the sons of men. Their doctrine, example and prayers, shall make them as dew to soften and moisten others, and make them fruitful. Their speech shall distil as the dew, *Deut. xxxii. 2.* and all about them shall wait for them as for the rain, *Job xxix. 23.* The people among whom they live, shall be as the grass, which flourisheth only by the blessing of God, and not by the art or care of man: they shall be beneficial to those about them, by drawing down God's blessings on them, as Jacob on Laban's house; and by cooling and mitigating God's wrath, which otherwise would burn them up, as the dew preserves the grass from being scorched by the sun, so Dr Pocock. They shall be mild and gentle in their behaviour, like their Master, who comes down like rain upon the new mown grass, *Psal. lxxii. 6.*

2. That they shall be as a lion among the beasts of the forest, that treads down, and tears in pieces, ver. 8. As they shall be silent, and gentle and communicative of all good, to those that receive the truth in the love of it, so they shall be bold as a lion in witnessing against the corruptions of the times and places they live in, and strong as a lion in the strength of God, to resist and overcome their spiritual enemies. The weapons of their warfare are mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds, *2 Cor. x. 4, 5.* They shall have courage, which all their adversaries shall not be able to resist, *Luke xxi. 15.* as when the lion tears, none can deliver. When infidelity is silenced, and all iniquity made to stop her mouth, when sinners are convinced and converted by the power of the gospel, in the doctrine of its ministers, and the conversation of its professors, then the remnant of Jacob is like a lion. This is explained, ver. 9. Thine hand shall be lift up upon thine adversaries; the church shall have the upper-hand at last, of all that oppose her. Her enemies shall be cut off, i. e. they shall cease to be enemies, their enmity shall be cut off: Christ's arrows of conviction shall be sharp in their hearts, so that they shall fall under him, i. e. they shall yield themselves subjects to him, *xlv. 5.* and be happily conquered and subdued, *Psal. cx. 2.*

3. That they shall be brought off from all carnal confidences, which they had relied on; that by the providence of God they should enjoy such a security, as that they should not need them; and by the grace of God they should be brought to see the folly of them, and come off from them. It was the sin of Israel, that they furnished themselves extravagantly with horses and chariots, and were soothsayers and idolaters, see *Isa. ii. 6, 7, 8.* But here it is promised that they shall not regard them any more. The tranquillity of the kingdom of Christ is intended in that promise, which explains this, *Zech. ix. 10.* I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem. Note, It is a great mercy to be deprived of those things which we have reposed a confidence in, in competition with God; which we have made our arm, and after which we have gone a whoring from God. Let us observe the particulars, (1.) They had trusted in chariots and horses, and multiplied them, *Psal. xx. 7.* but now God will cut off their horses and destroy their chariots, ver. 10. as David boughed the chariot-horses, *2 Sam. viii. 4.* They shall not have them, lest they should be tempted to trust in them. (2.) They depended upon their strong-holds and fortified cities for their security, but God will take care that they be demolished, ver. 11. I will cut off the cities of thy land, i. e. I will throw down thy strong-holds; they shall have them for habitations, but not for garrisons, for God will be their only place of defence, their high tower and their deliverer. (3.) Many of them depended much

much upon the conduct and advice of their conjurers, diviners and fortune-tellers, and those God will cut off, not only as *weak* things, and insufficient to relieve them, but as *wicked* things and sufficient to ruin them, *ver. 12. I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand*, that thou shalt no more take hold of them, and stay thy self upon them, and *thou shalt have no more soothsayers*, for thou shalt be convinced, that all their pretensions are a cheat. The justice of the nation shall cut them off according to the law, *Lev. xx. 27.* the preaching of the gospel brought men off from *using curious arts*, *Acts xix. 19.* (4.) Many of them had said to the work of their hands, *Ye are our gods*, but now idolatry shall be abolished and abandoned, *ver. 13. Thy graven images will I cut off, and thy standing images*, both those that were moveable, and those that were fixed; they shall be destroyed by the power of the law of Moses, and deserted by the power of the gospel of Christ, so that *thou shalt no more worship the work of thy hands*, but be ashamed that ever thou hast been so deluded. Among other monuments of idolatry, *I will pluck up thy groves out of the midst of thee*, *ver. 14.* which were planted and preserved in honour of their idols, and used in the worship of them; these they were ordered to burn, *Deut. xii. 2, 3.* and if they do not, God will; so as that they shall not have them to trust to. And so *will I destroy thy cities*, meaning the cities that were dedicated to the idols, to some or other dunghill deity; which they confided in for their protection.

4. That those who stand it out against the gospel of Christ, and continue in league with their idolatries and witchcrafts, shall fall under the wrath of God, and be consumed by it, *ver. 15. I will execute vengeance in anger, and fury upon the heathen*, i. e. upon heathenism, *such as they have not heard*; idolatries shall be done away, and idolaters put to shame. I will execute vengeance upon the heathen *which have not heard*, so some read it; or which would not hear and receive the doctrine of Christ. God will give his son either the hearts or the necks of his enemies, and make them either his friends or his footstool.

C H A P. VI.

After the precious promises in the two foregoing chapters, relating to the Messiah's kingdom, the prophet is here directed to set the sins of Israel in order before them, for their conviction and humiliation, as necessary to make way for the comfort of gospel grace. Christ's forerunner was a reprover, and preached repentance, and so prepared his way. Here (1.) God enters an action against his people for their base ingratitude, and the ill returns they had made him for his favours, *ver. 1—5.* (2.) He shews the wrong course they took, when they were under convictions, and the frivolous proposals they made, in answer to his charge, and what course they should have taken, *ver. 6—8.* (3.) He calls upon them to hear the voice of his judgments, and sets the sins in order before them, for which he still proceeded in his controversy with them, *ver. 9. their injustice*, *ver. 10—15.* and their idolatry, *ver. 16.* for both which ruin was coming upon them.

1. **H**EAR ye now what the LORD saith, Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice. 2. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. 3. O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. 4. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5. O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

Here, 1. The prefaces to the message are very solemn, and such as may engage our most serious attention. (1.) The people are commanded to give audience, *Hear ye now what the Lord saith*; what the prophet speaks, he speaks from God, and in his name, they are therefore bound to hear it, not as the word of a sinful dying man, but of the holy living God. *Hear now what he saith*, for first or last he will be heard. (2.) The prophet is commanded to speak in earnest, and to put an emphasis upon what he said, *Arise, contend thou before the mountains*, or *with the mountains*, and *let the hills hear thy voice*, if it were possible: contend with the mountains and hills of Judea, i. e. with the inhabitants of those mountains and hills; and some think reference is had to those mountains and hills on which they worship-

ped idols, and which by that means were polluted. But it is rather to be taken more generally, as appears by his call, not only to the mountains, but to the *strong foundations of the earth*, pursuant to the instructions given him. This is designed, (1.) To excite the earnestness of the prophet; he must speak as vehemently as if he designed to make even the hills and mountains hear him, must *cry aloud and not spare*; what he had to say in God's name, he must proclaim publicly *before the mountains*, as one that was neither ashamed nor afraid to own his message; he must speak as one concerned, as one that desired to speak *to the heart*, and therefore appeared to speak *from the heart*. (2.) To expose the stupidity of the people; *let the hills hear thy voice*, for this senseless, careless people will not hear it, will not heed it. Let the rocks, the foundations of the earth, that have no ears, hear, since Israel that has ears will not hear. It is an appeal to the mountains and hills, let them bear witness that Israel has fair warning given them, and good counsel if they would but take it. Thus Isaiah begins with, *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth.* Let them judge between God and his vineyard.

2. The message it self is very affecting; he is to let all the world know, that God has a quarrel with his people, good ground for an action against them. Their offences are publick, and therefore so are the articles of impeachment exhibited against them. Take notice, *the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel*, will plead by his prophets, plead by his providences, to make good his charge. Note, 1. Sin begets a controversy between God and man. The righteous God has an action against every sinner, an action of debt, an action of trespass, an action of slander. 2. If Israel, God's own professing people, provoke him by sin, he will let them know, that he has a controversy with them; he sees sin in them, and is displeased with it, nay, their sins are more displeasing to him than the sins of others, as they are a greater grief to his Spirit, and dishonour to his name. 3. God will plead with those whom he has a controversy with, will plead with his people Israel, that they may be convinced, and that he may be justified. In the close of the foregoing chapter, he pleaded with the heathen *in anger and fury*, to bring them to ruin, but here he pleads with Israel in compassion and tenderness, to bring them to repentance. *Come now and let us reason together*; God reasons with us, to teach us to reason with our selves: see the equity of God's cause, it will bear to be pleaded, and sinners themselves will be forced to confess judgment, and to own, that *God's ways are equal*, but their ways are unequal, *Ezek. xviii. 25.*

Now, 1. God here challengeth them, to shew what he had done against them, which might give them occasion to desert him. They had revolted from God, and rebelled against him, but had they any cause to do so? *ver. 3. O my people, what have I done unto thee? Wherein have I wearied thee?* If subjects quit their allegiance to their prince, they will pretend, as the ten tribes did, when they revolted from Rehoboam, that his yoke is too heavy for them; but can you pretend any such thing? *What have I done to you that is unjust or unkind? Wherein have I wearied you*, with the impositions of service, or the exactions of tribute? *Have I made you to serve with an offering?* *Isa. xliii. 23.* *What iniquity have your Fathers found in me?* *Jer. ii. 5.* He never deceived us, or disappointed our expectations from him, never did us wrong, or put disgrace upon us; why then do we wrong and dishonour him, and frustrate his expectations from us? Here is a challenge to all that ever were in God's service, to testify against him, if they have found him in any thing a hard master, and his demands unreasonable.

2. Since they could not shew any thing he had done against them, he will shew them a great deal that he has done for them, which should have engaged them for ever to his service, *ver. 4, 5.* They are here directed, and we in them, to look a great way back in their reviews of the divine favour; let them remember their former days, their first days, when they were formed into a people, and the great things God did for them.

(1.) When he brought them out of Egypt, the land of their bondage, *ver. 4.* They were content with their slavery, and almost in love with their chains, for the sake of the *garlick and onions* they had plenty of; but God brought them up, inspired them with an ambition of liberty, and animated them with a resolution, by a bold effort, to shake off their fetters; the Egyptians held them fast, and would not let the people go, but God redeemed them, not by price, but by force; *out of the house of servants*, or rather, *the house of bondage*, for it is the same word that is used in the preface of the ten commandments; which insinuates, that the same considerations which are arguments for duty, if they be not improved by us, will be improved against us as aggravations of sin. When he brought them out of Egypt, into a vast howling wilderness, as he left not himself without witness, so he left not them without guides, for he sent before them *Moses, Aaron and Miriam, three prophets*, saith the Chaldee paraphrase: Moses the great prophet of the Old Testament, Aaron his prophet, *Exod. vii. 1.* and Miriam a prophetess, *Exod. xv. 20.* Note, When we are calling to mind God's former mercies to us, we must not forget the mercy of good teachers and governors when we were young, let those be made mention of to the glory of God, who went before us, saying, this is the way,

way, walk in it; it was God that *sent them before us*, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to prepare a people for him.

(2.) When he brought them into Canaan; God no less glorified himself, and honoured them, in what he did for them when he brought them into the land of *their rest*, than in what he did for them, when he brought them out of the land of *their servitude*. When Moses, Aaron, and Miriam were dead, yet they found God the same. Let them *remember now* what God did for them, (1.) In *baffling and defeating* the designs of Balak and Balaam against them, which he did by the power he has over the hearts and tongues of men, *ver. 5.* Let them remember *what Balak the king of Moab consulted*, what mischief he devised, and designed to do to Israel, when they encamped in the plains of Moab; that which he consulted was, to *curse Israel*, to divide between them and their God, and to disengage him from the protection of them. Among the heathen, when they made war upon any people, they endeavoured by magick charms or otherwise, to get from them their *tutelar gods*, as to rob Troy of its Palladium; Macrobius has a chapter, *de ritu evacuandi Deos*; this Balak would try against Israel; but remember *what Balaam the son of Beor answered him*, how contrary to his own intention and inclination, instead of cursing Israel he blessed them, to the extremest confusion and vexation of Balak. Let them remember the malice of the heathen against them, and for that reason, never *learn the way of the heathen*, or associate with them; let them remember the kindness of their God to them, how he *turned the curse into a blessing, because the Lord thy God loved thee*, as it is, *Deut. xxiii. 5.* and for that reason never forsake him. Note, The disappointing of the devices of the church's enemies, ought always to be remembered to the glory of the church's protector, who can make *answer of the tongue* directly to contradict the *preparation and consultation of the heart*, *Prov. xvi. 1.* (2.) In bringing them from *Shittim*, their last lodgment, out of Canaan, unto *Gilgal* their first lodgment in Canaan. There it was, between Shittim and Gilgal, that upon the death of Moses, Joshua, a type of Christ, was raised up to put Israel in possession of the land of promise, and to fight their battles; there it was that they passed over Jordan, through the divided waters, and renewed the covenant of circumcision; these mercies of God to their fathers they must now remember, that they may *know the righteousness of the Lord, his righteousnesses*, so the word is; his justice in destroying the Canaanites, his goodness in giving rest to his people Israel, and his faithfulness to his promise made unto the fathers. The remembrance of what God had done for them, might *convince* them of all this, and *engage* them for ever to his service. Or, they may refer to the *controversy* now *pleaded* between God and Israel; let them remember God's many favours to them and their fathers, and compare with them their unworthy, ungrateful carriage towards him, *that they may know the righteousness of the Lord* in contending with them, and it may appear, that in this controversy he has *right on his side*; his ways are equal, for he will be *justified when he speaks*, and *clear when he judgeth*.

6. ¶ *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow my self before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? 7. Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?*

Here is the proposal for accommodation between God and Israel, the parties that were at variance in the beginning of the chapter. Upon the trial, judgment is given against Israel, they are convicted of injustice and ingratitude towards God, the crimes with which they stood charged; it is too plain to be denied, too bad to be excused, and therefore,

1. They express their desires to be *at peace with God*, upon any terms; *ver. 6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* Being made sensible of the justice of God's controversy with them, and dreading the consequences of it, they were inquisitive what they might do to be reconciled to God, and to make him their friend. They apply themselves to a proper person, with this enquiry, to the prophet, the Lord's messenger, by whose ministry they had been convinced; who so fit to *shew them their way*, as he that had made them sensible of their having *missed it*? And it is observable, that each one speaks for himself, *Wherewith shall I come?* Knowing every one the plague of his own heart, they ask, *not what shall this man do?* but *what shall I do?* Note, Deep convictions of guilt and wrath, will put men upon careful enquiries after peace and pardon, and then, and not till then, there begins to be some hopes of them. They enquire *wherewith they may come before the Lord, and bow them-*

No. lxxvi.

selves before the high God. They believe there is a God; that he is Jehovah, and that he is the *high God*, the *most High*. They whose consciences are convinced, have learned to speak very honourably of God, whom before they spake slightly of. Now, (1.) We know we must *come before God*; he is the God with whom *we have to do*; we must come as subjects to pay our homage to him, as beggars to ask alms from him, nay, we must *come before him*, as criminals to receive our doom from him; must come before him as *our judge*. (2.) When we come before him, we must *bow before him*; it is our duty to be very humble and reverent in our approaches to him, and when we come before him, there is no remedy but we must submit; it is to no purpose to contend with him. (3.) When we come and *bow before him*, it is our great concern to find favour with him; and to be accepted of him; their enquiry is, *What will the Lord be pleased with?* Note, All that rightly understand themselves and their own interest, cannot but be solicitous what they must do to please God; to avoid his displeasure, and to obtain his good will: (4.) In order to God's being pleased with us, our care must be, that the sin by which we have displeased him, may be *taken away*; and an atonement made for it. The enquiry here is, *what shall I give for my transgression, for the sin of my soul?* Note, The transgression we are guilty of, is the *sin of our soul*; for the soul *acts it*, without the soul's act it is not sin; and the soul *suffers by it*; it is the *disorder, disease, and defilement* of the soul, and threatens to be the death of it, *what shall I give for my transgressions?* What will be accepted as a satisfaction of his justice, a reparation of his honour, and what will avail to shelter me from his wrath; (5.) We must therefore ask, *wherewith we may come before him?* We must not appear before the Lord empty; what shall we bring with us? In what manner must we come? In whose name must we come? We have not that in ourselves which will recommend us to him, but must have it from another; what righteousness then shall we appear before him in?

2. They make proposals, such as they are; in order to it; their enquiry was very good and right, and what we are all concerned to make; but their proposals betray their ignorance, tho' they show their zeal; let us examine them, (1.) They *bid high*. They offer, (1.) That which is very *rich and costly*, *thousands of rams*: God required *one ram* for a sin-offering, they proffer flocks of them, their whole stock; will be content to make themselves beggars, so that they may but be at peace with God. They will bring the best they have, the *rams*, and the *most* of them, till it comes to *thousands*. (2.) That which is very *dear to them*, and which they would be most loth to part with. They could be content to part with *their first-born for their transgressions*, if that would be accepted as an atonement; and the *fruit of their body* for the *sin of their soul*. To them that were become *vain in their imaginations*, this seemed a probable expedient of making satisfaction for sin, because our children are pieces of our selves; and therefore the heathen sacrificed their children to appease their offended deities. Note, Those that are thoroughly convinced of sin, of the malignity of it, and of their misery and danger by reason of it, would give all the world, if they had it, for peace and pardon.

(2.) Yet they do not *bid right*. It is true, some of these things were instituted by the ceremonial law, as the bringing of *burnt-offerings* to God's altar, and *calves of a year old*, *rams* for sin-offerings, and *oil* for the meat-offerings; but these alone would not recommend them to God; God had often declared that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken than the fat of rams*; that *sacrifice and offering he would not*; the legal sacrifices had their virtue and value from the institution, and the reference they had to Christ the great propitiation; but otherwise of themselves, it was impossible that the *blood of bulls and goats should take away sin*. And as to the other things here mentioned, (1.) Some of them are impracticable things, as *rivers of oil*, which nature has not provided to feed mens luxury, but *rivers of water* to supply mens necessity. All the proposals of peace but those that are according to the gospel are absurd: one stream of the blood of Christ, is worth ten thousand rivers of oil. (2.) Some of them are *wicked things*, as to give our *first-born* and the *fruit of our body* to death, which would but add to the transgression, and the *sin of the soul*. He that hates robbery for burnt-offerings, much more hateth murder, such murder; what right have we to our *first-born* and the *fruit of our body*, do they not belong to God? Are they not his already, and born to him? Are they not sinners by nature, and their lives forfeited upon their own account, how then can they be a ransom for ours? (3.) They are all *external things*, parts of the bodily exercise which profiteth little, and which could not *make the comers thereunto perfect*. (4.) They are all *insignificant*, and insufficient, to attain the end proposed; they could not answer the demands of divine justice, nor satisfy the wrong done to God in his honour by sin, nor would they serve in lieu of the sanctification of the heart, and the reformation of the life. Men will part with any thing rather than their sins, but they part with nothing to God's acceptance, unless they part with them.

3. God tells them plainly what he demands and insists upon, from those that would be accepted of him, *ver. 8.* Let their money perish with them, that think the pardon of sin, and the

favour

favour of God may be so purchased; no, *God hath shewed thee O man what is good.* Here we are told,

1. That God hath made a discovery of his mind and will to us; for the rectifying of our mistakes, and the directing of our practice. (1.) It is *God himself* that hath *shewed us* what we must do. We need not trouble ourselves to make proposals, the terms are already settled and laid down: he whom we have offended, and to whom we are accountable, hath told us upon what conditions he will be reconciled to us. (2.) It is to *man* that he hath shewed it; not only to thee *O Israel*, but to thee, *O man*, Gentiles as well as Jews. To men that are rational creatures, and capable of receiving the discovery, and not to brutes; to men for whom a remedy is provided, not to devils whose case is desperate. What is spoken to *all men every where* in general, must by faith be applied to ourselves in particular, as if it were spoken to thee, *O man*, by name, and to no other. (3.) It is a discovery of *that which is good*, and which *the Lord requires of us*. He hath shewed us *our end* which we should aim at, in shewing us what is good, wherein our true happiness doth consist; he hath shewed us *our way* in which we must walk towards that end, in shewing us *what he requires of us*. There is something which God requires we should do for him, and devote to him; and it is good; it is good *in itself*: there is an innate goodness in moral duties, antecedent to the command; they are not as ceremonial observances, therefore good, because they are commanded, but therefore commanded, because they are good, consonant to the eternal rule and reason of good and evil, which is unalterable. It has likewise a direct tendency to *our good*; our conformity to it, is not only the condition of our future happiness, but it is a great expedient of our present happiness; *in keeping God's commandments there is a great reward*, as well as after keeping them. (4.) It is shewed us; God has not only made it known, but made it plain; he hath discovered it to us with such convincing evidence, as amounts to a demonstration; *Lo this, we have searched it, so it is*.

2. What that discovery is. The good which God requires of us, is not the paying of a price for the pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, but doing the duty, which is the condition of our interest in the pardon purchased. (1.) We must *do justly*, must *render to all their due*, according as our relation and obligation to them is; must do wrong to none, but do right to all, in their bodies, goods, and name. (2.) We must *love mercy*, not only be *just* to all we deal with, but *kind* to all that need us, and that we are in a capacity of doing good to. Nor must we only *show mercy*, but we must *love mercy*, we must delight in it, as our God doth, must be glad of an opportunity to do good, and do it cheerfully. Justice is put before mercy, for we must not give that in alms which is wrongfully got, or with which our debts should be paid; *God hates robbery for a burnt-offering*. (3.) We must *walk humbly with our God*: this includes all the duties of the first table. We must take the Lord for *our God*, in covenant, must attend on him, and adhere to him as *ours*, and must make it our constant care and business to please him, Enoch's walking with God is interpreted, *Heb. xi. 5. his pleasing God*, we must in the whole course of our conversation conform ourselves to the will of God, keep up our communion with God, and study to approve ourselves to him in our integrity; and this we must do *humbly*, (submitting our understandings to the truths of God, and our wills to his precepts and providences) we must *humble ourselves to walk with God*, so the margin reads it; every thought within us must be brought down, to be brought into obedience to God, if we would walk comfortably with him. This is that which God requires, and without which the most costly services are *vain oblations*; this is more than *all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*.

9. The LORD's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it. 10. ¶ Are there yet the treasures of wickedness in the house of the wicked, and the scant measure that is abominable? 11. Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights? 12. For the rich men thereof are full of violence, and the inhabitants thereof have spoken lyes, and their tongue is deceitful in their mouth. 13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee, in making thee desolate because of thy sins. 14. Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied, and thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee, and thou shalt take hold, but shalt not deliver: and that which thou deliverest will I give up to the sword. 15. Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap: thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; and sweet wine, but thou shalt not drink wine. 16. ¶ For the statutes of Omri are kept, and all the works of the house of Ahab, and ye walk in their counsels, that I

should make thee a desolation. and the inhabitants thereof an hissing; therefore ye shall bear the reproach of my people.

God having shewed them how necessary it was that they should *do justly*, here shews them how plain it was that they had *done unjustly*, and since they submitted not to his controversy, nor went the right way to have it *taken up*, here he *proceeds* in it. Observe,

1. How the action is entered against them, *ver. 9.* God speaks to *the city*, to Jerusalem, to Samaria, his *voice cries* to it, by his servants the prophets, who were to *cry aloud and not spare*. Note, The voice of the prophets is *the Lord's voice*, and that *cries to the city*, cries to the country; *Doth not wisdom cry?* Prov. viii. 1. When the sin of a city cries to God, his voice cries against the city; and when the judgments of God are coming upon a city, his voice first *cries unto it*; he warns before he wounds, because he is *not willing that any should perish*. Now observe, (1.) How the voice of God is discerned by some; *The man of wisdom will see thy name*; when the voice of God cries to us, we may by it *see his name*, may discern and perceive that by which he makes himself known. Yet many see it not, are not *aware* of it, because they do not *regard* it, *God speaketh once, yea twice, and they perceive it not*, Job xxxiii. 14. but they that are *men of wisdom* will *see* it, and *perceive* it, and make a good use of it. Note, It is a point of true wisdom to discover the *name of God* in the *voice of God*, and to learn what he is, from what he *saith*; *wisdom shall see thy name, for the knowledge of the holy is understanding*. (2.) What this voice of God *saith* to all, *Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it*. Hear the rod, when it is *coming*, hear it at a distance, before you see it and feel it; and be awakened to go forth to meet the Lord in the way of his judgments. Hear the rod when it is *come*, and is actually upon you, and you are sensible of the smart of it; hear what it *saith* to you, what convictions, what counsels, what cautions it speaks to you. Note, Every rod has a voice, and it is the voice of God that is to be heard in the rod of God; and it is well for them that understand the language of it; which if we would do, we must have an eye to *him that appointed it*. Note, Every rod is appointed, of what kind it shall be, where it shall light, and how long it shall lie. God in every affliction *performeth the thing that is appointed for us*, John xxiii. 14. and to him therefore we must *have an eye*, to him we must *have an ear*; hear what he *saith* to us by the affliction, *hear it, and know it for thy good*, Job v. 6. The work of ministers is to explain the providences of God, and to quicken and direct men to learn the lessons that are taught by them.

2. What is the ground of the action, and what are the things that are laid to their charge.

(1.) They are charged with *injustice*, a sin against the second table. Are there yet to be found among them, the marks and means of fraudulent dealing? What, after all the methods that God has taken, to teach them to *do justly*, will they yet *deal unjustly*? It seems they will, *ver. 10.* And *shall I count them pure?* *ver. 11.* No, this is a sin which will by no means consist with a profession of purity: those that are dishonest in their dealings have not the spots of God's children, and shall never be reckoned pure, whatever shews of devotion they may make; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*. When a man is suspected of theft, or fraud, the justice of peace will send a warrant to search his house; God here, doth, as it were, search the houses of these citizens, and there he finds, (1.) *Treasures of wickedness*; abundance of wealth, but it is ill got, and not like to prosper, for *treasures of wickedness profit nothing*. (2.) A *scant measure*, by which they sold to the poor, and so exacted upon them and cheated them. (3.) They had *wicked balances* and *a bag of false weights*, by which, under a pretence of *weighing* what they sold, and giving the buyer what was *right*, they did him the greatest wrong, *ver. 11.* (4.) Those that had wealth and power in their hands, abused it to oppression and extortion; *The rich men thereof are full of violence*; for they that have *much* would have *more*, and are in a capacity of making it more, by the power which their abundance of wealth gives them. They are *full of violence*, i. e. they have their houses full of that which is got by violence. (5.) Those that had not advantage of doing wrong by their wealth, yet found means of defrauding those they dealt with. *The inhabitants thereof have spoken lyes*; if they are not able to use *force and violence*, they use *fraud and deceit*: the *inhabitants* have *spoken lyes*, and their tongue is *deceitful in their mouth*; they do not stick at a deliberate lye to make a good bargain. Some understand it of their speaking falsely concerning God, saying, *The Lord seeth not, he hath forsaken the earth*, Ezek. viii. 12.

(2.) They are charged with *idolatry*, *ver. 6.* *The statutes of Omri are kept, and all the work of the house of Ahab*; both these kings were wicked, and *did evil in the sight of the Lord*: but the wickedness which they established by a law, concerning which they made *statutes*, and which was the peculiar *work of that house*, was *idolatry*. Omri walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin of *provoking God to anger with their vanities*, 1 Kings xvi.

xvi. 26. and ver. 31. Ahab introduced the worship of Baal. These reigns were some ages before the time when this prophet lived, and yet the wickedness which they established by their laws and examples, remained to this day; those *statutes* were still kept, and that *work* was still done; and the princes and people still walked in their counsels, took the same measures, and governed themselves and the people by the same politicks. Observe,

(1.) The same wickedness continued from one generation to another. Sin is a root of bitterness soon planted, but not so soon plucked up again. The iniquity of former ages is often transmitted to, and entailed upon, the succeeding ones. Those that make corrupt laws, and bring in corrupt usages, are doing that which perhaps may prove the ruin of the child unborn. (2.) It was never the less evil in itself, provoking to God, and dangerous to the sinners, for its having been established and confirmed by the laws of princes, the examples of great men, and a long prescription. Tho' the worship of idols is enacted by the statute of Omri, recommended by the practice of the house of Ahab, and pleads that it has been the usage of many generations, yet it is still displeasing to God, and destructive to Israel; for no laws or customs are of force against the divine command.

3. What is the judgment given upon this. Being found guilty of these crimes, the sentence is, that which God had given them warning of, ver. 9. shall be brought upon them, ver. 13. Therefore also will I make thee sick in smiting thee: As they had smitten the poor with the rod of their oppressions, so would God in like manner smite them, so as to make them sick, sick of the gains they had unjustly gotten, so that tho' they had swallowed down riches, they should vomit them up again, Job xx. 15. Their doom is,

1. That what they have, they shall not have any comfortable enjoyment of, it shall do them no good; they grasped at more than enough, but when they have it, it shall not be enough to make them easy and happy; what is got by fraud and oppression, cannot be kept or enjoyed with any satisfaction. (1.) Their food shall not nourish them, *Thou shalt eat, but not be satisfied*; either because the food shall not digest, for want of God's blessing going along with it; or, because the appetite shall by disease be made insatiable, and still craving, the just punishment of those that were greedy of gain, and enlarged their desire as hell. Men may be surfeited with the good things of this world, and yet not satisfied, Eccl. v. 10. Isa. lv. 2. (2.) Their country shall not harbour and protect them; *thy casting down shall be in the midst of thee*, i. e. thou shalt be broken and ruined by intestine troubles, mischiefs at home enough to cast thee down, tho' thou shouldst not be invaded by a foreign force. God can cast a nation down, by that which is in the midst of them, can consume them by a fire in their own bowels. (3.) They shall not be able to preserve what they have, from a foreign force, nor to recover what they have lost. *Thou shalt take hold of what is about to be taken from thee, but thou shalt not hold it fast, shalt catch at it, but thou shalt not deliver it, shalt not retrieve it*; it is meant of their wives and children, that were very dear to them, which they took hold of, as resolved not to part with them, but there is no remedy, they must go into captivity. Note, What we hold closest we commonly lose soonest, and that proves least safe which is most dear. (4.) What they save for a time, shall be reserved for a future and forer stroke; *that which thou deliverest out of the hand of one enemy, will I give up to the sword of another enemy*, for God has many arrows in his quiver, if one miss the sinner, the next shall not. (5.) What they have laboured for, they shall not enjoy, ver. 15. *Thou shalt sow, but thou shalt not reap*; either it shall be blasted and withered, and there shall be nothing to reap, or an enemy shall come and reap it for himself, or thou shalt be carried into captivity, and leave it to be reaped by thou knowest not whom; thou shalt tread the olives, but thou shalt not anoint thee with oil; having no heart to make use of ornaments and refreshments, when all is going to ruin. Thou shalt tread out the sweet wine, but shalt not drink wine, for many things may fall between the cup and the lip. Note, It is very grievous to be disappointed of our expectations, and not to have the pleasure of that which we have taken pains for; and this will be the just punishment of those that frustrate God's expectations from them, and answer not the cost he has been at upon them. See this threatened in the law, Lev. xxvi. 16. Deut. xxviii. 30, 38, &c. and compare, Isa. lxii. 8, 9.

2. That all they have, shall at length be taken from them, ver. 13. *Thou shalt be made desolate, because of thy sins*; and ver. 16. *A desolation and a hissing*. Sin makes a nation desolate: and when a people that have been famous and flourishing, are made desolate, it is the astonishment of some, and the triumph of others; some lament it, and others hiss at it. Thus ye shall bear the reproach of my people. Their being the people of God in name and profession, while they kept close to their duty, and kept themselves in his love, was an honour to them, and all their neighbours thought it so: but now they have corrupted and ruined themselves, now their sins and God's judgments have made their land desolate, their having been once the people of God, doth but turn so much the more to their reproach; their enemies will say, *these are the people of the Lord*, Ezek. xxxvi. 20. Note, If pro-

fessors of religion ruin themselves, their ruin will be the most reproachful of any other; and they in a special manner will rise at the last day to everlasting shame and contempt.

CHAP. VII.

In this chapter, (1.) The prophet in the name of the church sadly laments the woful decay of religion in the age wherein he lived, and the deluge of impiety and immorality which overwhelmed the nation, which levelled the differences, and bore down the fences of all that is just and sacred, ver. 1—6. (2.) The prophet, for the sake of the church, prescribes comforts, which may be of use at such a time, and gives counsels what to do, (1.) They must have an eye to God, ver. 7. (2.) They must courageously bear up against the insolencies of the enemy, ver. 8—10. (3.) They must patiently lie down under the rebukes of their God, ver. 9. (4.) They must expect no other, but that the trouble would continue long, and must endeavour to make the best of it, ver. 11—13. (5.) They must encourage themselves with God's promises, in answer to the prophet's prayers, ver. 14, 15. (6.) They must foresee the fall of their enemies, that now triumphed over them, ver. 16, 17. (7.) They must themselves triumph in the mercy and grace of God, and his faithfulness to his covenant, ver. 18—20. and with that comfortable word the prophecy concludes.

1. **W**O is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. 2. The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood: they hunt every man his brother with a net. 3. ¶ That they may do evil with both hands earnestly, the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward: and the great man he uttereth his mischievous desire: so they wrap it up. 4. The best of them is as a brier: the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge: the day of thy watchmen and the visitation cometh; now shall be their perplexity. 5. ¶ Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide: keep the doors of thy mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom. 6. For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house.

This is such a description of bad times, as some think could scarce agree to the times of Hezekiah, when this prophet prophesied; and therefore they rather take it as a prediction of what should be in the reign of Manasseh. But we may rather suppose it to be in the reign of Ahaz (and in that reign he prophesied, chap. i. 1.) or in the beginning of Hezekiah's time, before the reformation he was instrumental in; nay, in the best of his days, and when he had done his best to purge out corruptions, still there was much amiss. The prophet cries out, *Wo is me*; he bemoans himself that his lot was cast in such a degenerate age, and thinks it his great unhappiness, that he lived among a people that were ripening apace for a ruin which many a good man would unavoidably be involved in. Thus David cries out, *Wo is me, that I sojourn in Mesecb*. He laments it,

1. That there were so few good people to be found, even among those that were called God's people; and this was their reproach, spoken of chap. v. 6. *The good man is perished out of the earth, or out of the land*, the land of Canaan, it was a good land, and a land of uprightness, (Isa. xxvi. 10.) but there were few good men in it, none upright among them, ver. 2. The good man is a godly man, and a merciful man, the word signifies both. Those are compleatly good men, that are devout towards God, and compassionate and beneficent towards men; that love mercy and walk with God: These are perished; those few honest men that some time ago enriched and adorned our country, are now dead and gone, and there are none risen up in their stead, that tread in their steps; honesty is banished, and there is no such thing as a good man to be light on. Those that were of religious education, are degenerated, and become as bad as the worst; the godly man ceaseth, Psal. xii. 1. This is illustrated by a comparison, ver. 1. They were as when they have gathered the summer fruits; it was as hard a thing to find a good man, as to find any of the summer fruits (which were the choicest and best, and therefore

fore must carefully be gathered in) when the harvest is over. The prophet is ready to say, as Elijah in his time, *1 Kings xix. 10. I, even I only am left.* Good men, that used to hang in clusters, are now as the *grape gleanings of the vintage*, here and there a berry, *Isa. xvii. 6.* you can find no societies of them, as bunches of grapes, but those that are, are single persons, *there is no cluster to eat*; and the best and fullest grapes are those that grow in large clusters. Some think this speaks not only the fewness of good people, but that those few which remained, that went for good people, were good for little; like the small withered grapes, the *refuse* that were *left behind*, not only by the gatherer, but by the gleaner. When the prophet observed this universal degeneracy, it made him *desire the first-ripe fruit*, i. e. he wished to see such worthy good men as were in the former ages, were the ornaments of the primitive times; and as far excelled the best of all the present age, as the first and full-ripe fruits do those of the latter growth, that never come to maturity. When we read and hear of the wisdom and zeal, the strictness and conscientiousness, the devotion and charity of the professors of religion in former ages, and see the reverse of this, in those of the present age, we cannot but sit down, and wish with a sigh, *O for primitive christianity again!* Where is the plainness and integrity of those that went before us? Where are the Israelites indeed, without guile? Our *souls desire* them, but in vain: The golden age is gone, and past recall; we must make the best of what is, for we are not likely to see such times as have been.

2. That there were so many *wicked, mischievous people* among them; not only none that did any good, but multitudes that did all the hurt they could. *They all lie in wait for blood, and hunt every man his brother.* To get wealth to themselves, they care not what wrong, what hurt they do to their neighbours and nearest relations: They act as if mankind were in a state of war, and force were the only right. They are as *beasts of prey* to their neighbours, for *they all lie in wait for blood*, as lions for their prey, they thirst after it, make nothing of taking away any man's life or livelihood, to serve a turn for themselves; and *lie in wait* for an opportunity to do it. Their neighbours are as *beasts of prey to them*, for *they hunt every man his brother with a net*, they persecute them as noxious creatures, fit to be taken and destroyed, though they are innocent, excellent ones. We say of him that is out-lawed, *Caput gerit lupinum*, he is to be hunted as a wolf. Or, they hunt them as men do the game, to feast upon it; they have a thousand cursed arts of ensnaring men to their ruin, so that they may but get by it. Thus *they do mischief with both hands earnestly*; their hearts desire it, their heads contrive it, and then *both hands* are ready to put it in execution. Note, The more eager and intent men are upon any sinful pursuit, and the more pains they take in it, the more provoking it is.

3. That the magistrates, who by their office ought to have been the patrons and protectors of right, were the practicers and promoters of wrong; *that they may do evil with both hands earnestly*, to excite and animate themselves in it, *the prince asketh, and the judge asketh for a reward*, for a bribe, with which they will be hired to exert all their power, for the supporting and carrying on of any wicked design, *with both hands*; *they do evil with both hands well*, so some read it: They do ill with a great deal of art and dexterity, they praise themselves for doing it so well; others thus, *to do evil they have both hands*, (they catch at an opportunity of doing mischief) *but to do good the prince and the judge ask for a reward*: If they do any good offices, they are mercenary in them, and must be paid for them. The *great man* that has wealth and power to do good, he is not ashamed to utter his *mischievous desire*, in conjunction with the prince and the judge, who are ready to support him, and stand by him in it; *so they wrap it up*, they perplex the matter, involve it, and make it intricate (so some understand it) that they may lose equity in a mist, and so make the cause turn which way they please. It is ill with a people, when their *princes, and judges, and great men*, are in a confederacy to pervert justice: And it is a sad character that is given of them, *ver. 4. that the best of them is as a brier, and the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge*, i. e. it is a dangerous thing to have any thing to do with them, *he that toucheth them must be fenced with iron*, *2 Sam. xxiii. 6, 7.* he shall be sure to be scratched, to have his clothes torn, and his eyes almost pulled out. And if this be the character of the *best and most upright*, what are the worst? And when things are come to this pass, *the day of the watchman comes*, that is, as it follows, *the day of thy visitation*, when God will reckon with thee for all this wickedness; which is called the day of the watchmen, because their prophets, whom God set as *watchmen* over them, had often warned them of that day: When all flesh have corrupted their way, even the *best* and the *most upright*, what can be expected but a *day of visitation*? A deluge of judgments, as that which drowned the old world, when the earth was filled with violence.

4. That there was no faith in man, people were grown so universally treacherous, that one knew not who to repose any confidence in, *ver. 5.* Those that have any sense of honour, or sparks of virtue remaining in them, have a mighty regard to the laws of *friendship*, they would not discover what passed in

private conversation, nor divulge secrets to the prejudice of a friend; but those things are now made a jest of, you will not meet with a *friend* that you dare *trust*, whose word you dare *take*, or who will have any tenderness or concern for you; so that wise men shall give it and take it for a rule, *Trust ye not in a friend*, for you will find him false, you can *trust* him no farther than you can *see* him; and even he that passeth for an honest man, you will find to be so, only *with good looking to*. Nay, he that undertakes to be *your guide*, to lead you into any business which he professeth to understand better than you, yet you cannot *put a confidence* in him, for he will be sure to mislead you, if he can get any thing by it. Some by a guide understand a *husband*, who is called *the guide of thy youth*; and that agrees well enough with what follows, *Keep the doors of thy lips from her that lieth in thy bosom*, from thy own wife; take heed what thou sayest before her, lest she betray thee, as Delilah did Sampson; lest she be the *bird of the air* that carries the voice of that which thou sayest in thy *bed-chamber*, *Eccl. x. 6.* It is an *evil time* indeed, when the prudent are obliged even thus far to *keep silence*.

5. That children were abusive to their parents, and men had no comfort, no satisfaction in their own families, and their nearest relations, *ver. 6.* The times are bad indeed, when *the son dishonoureth his father*, gives him ill language, exposeth him, threatens him, and studies to do him a mischief, *when the daughter riseth up* in rebellion against her own mother, having no sense of duty nor natural affection, and no marvel that then the *daughter-in-law*, quarrels with her *mother-in-law*, and is vexatious to her: Either they cannot agree about their property and interest, or their humours and passions clash; or from a spirit of bigotry and persecution, *the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child*, *Matth. x. 4. Luk. xxi. 16.* It is sad when a man's betrayers and worst enemies are the *men of his own house*, his own children and servants that should be his guard, and his best friends. Note, The contempt and violation of the laws of domestical duties, are a sad symptom of a universal corruption of manners: Those are never likely to *come to good* that are undutiful to their parents, and study to be provoking to them, and cross them.

7. Therefore I will look unto the LORD: I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me. 8. ¶ Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me. 9. I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against him, until he plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness. 10. Then she that is mine enemy shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where is the LORD thy God? mine eyes shall behold her: now shall she be trodden down as the mire of the streets. 11. In the day that thy walls are to be built, in that day shall the decree be far removed. 12. In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortresses even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. 13. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate, because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings.

The prophet having sadly complained of the wickedness of the times he lived in, here fastens upon some considerations for the comfort of himself and his friends, in reference thereunto. The case is bad, but it is not desperate; yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

1. Though God be now *displeased*, he shall be *reconciled* to us, and then all will be well, *ver. 7, 9.* We are now under the *indignation of the Lord*, God is angry with us, and justly, because *we have sinned against him*. Note, it is *our sin* against God, that provokes his *indignation* against us; and we must see it, and own it, whenever we are under divine rebukes, that we may justify God, and may study to answer his end in afflicting us, by repenting of sin, and breaking off from it. Now, at such a time,

(1.) We must have recourse to God, under our troubles, *ver. 7. Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* When a child of God has never so much occasion to cry, *Who is me*, as the prophet here, *ver. 1.* yet it may be a comfort to him, that he has a God to look to, a God to come to, to fly to, in whom he may rejoice and have satisfaction. All may look *bright* above him, when all looks *black* and *dark* about him. The prophet had been complaining that there was no comfort to be had, no confidence to be put in friends and relations on earth, and this drives him to his God. *Therefore I will look unto the Lord.* The less reason we have to delight in any creature, the more reason

we have to delight in God. If princes are not to be trusted, we may say *happy is the man that has the God of Jacob for his help, and happy am I*, even in the midst of my present *woes*, if he be my help. If men be *false*, this is our comfort, that God is *faithful*; if relations be unkind, he is and will be gracious. Let us therefore look above and beyond them, and overlook our disappointment in them, and *look unto the Lord*.

(2.) We must *submit to the will of God* in our troubles, *I will bear the indignation of the Lord*, will bear it patiently without murmuring and repining, *because I have sinned against him*. Note, Those that are truly penitent for sin, will see a great deal of reason to be patient under affliction. *Wherefore should a man complain, for the punishment of his sin?* When we complain to God of the badness of the times, we ought to complain against ourselves for the badness of our own hearts.

(3.) We must depend upon God to work deliverance for us, and put a good issue to our troubles in due time; we must not only look to him, but look for him: *I will wait for the God of my salvation*, and for his gracious returns to me. In our greatest distresses, we shall see no reason to despair of salvation, if by faith we eye God as the *God of our salvation*; who is able to save the *weakest* upon their humble petition, and *willing* to save the *worst*, upon their true repentance. And if we depend on God, as the God of our salvation, we must *wait for him*, and for his salvation, in his own way, and his own time. Let us now see, what the church is here taught to expect and promise herself from God, even then, when things are brought to the last extremity. (1.) *My God will hear me*; if the Lord be our God, he will hear our prayers, and grant an answer of peace to them. (2.) *When I fall*, and am in danger of being dashed in pieces by the fall, yet *I shall arise* and recover myself again. *I fall*, but am not *utterly cast down*, *Psal. xxxvii. 24.* (3.) *When I sit in darkness*, desolate and disconsolate, melancholy and perplexed, and not knowing what to do, or which way to look for relief, yet then *the Lord shall be a light to me*, to comfort and revive me, to instruct and teach me, to direct and guide me, as a light to mine eyes, a light to my feet, a light in a dark place. (4.) *He will plead my cause, and execute judgment for me*, ver. 9. If we heartily espouse the cause of God, the just, but injured cause of religion and virtue, and make it our cause, we may hope he will own our cause, and plead it. The church's cause, though it seem for a time to go against her, yet will at length be pleaded with jealousy, and judgment not only *given against*, but *executed upon* the enemies of it. (5.) *He will bring me forth to the light*, shall make me shine eminently out of obscurity, and become conspicuous; shall make my righteousness shine evidently, from under the dark cloud of calumny, *Psal. xxxvii. 6. Isa. lviii. 10.* The morning of comfort shall shine forth, out of the long and dark night of trouble. (6.) *I shall behold his righteousness*, i. e. I shall see the equity of his proceedings concerning me, and the performance of his promises to me.

2. Though enemies *triumph* and *insult*, they shall be *silenced* and *put to shame*, ver. 8, 10. Observe here,

(1.) How proudly the enemies of God's people trample upon them in their distress, they said, *Where is the Lord their God?* As if because they were afflicted, God had forsaken them, and they know not where to find him with their prayers, and he knew not how to help them with his favours. This David's enemies said to him, and it was a sword in his bones, *Psal. xlii. 10.* and see *Psal. cxv. 2.* Thus in reproaching Israel as an abandoned people, they reflected on the God of Israel, as an unkind, unfaithful God.

(2.) How comfortably the people of God by faith bear up themselves under these insults, ver. 8. *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy*, I am now *down* but shall not be always so, and when my God appears for me, then *she that is mine enemy shall see it and be ashamed*, not only being disappointed in her expectations of the church's utter ruin, but having the same cup of trembling put into her hand. Then *mine eyes shall behold her* in the same deplorable condition that I am now in. *Now shall she be trodden down*. Note, The deliverance of the church will be the confusion of her enemies; and their shame shall be double, when as they have trampled upon God's people, so they shall themselves be trampled upon.

3. Tho' the land continue a great while *desolate*, yet it shall at length be *replenished* again, when the time, even the set time, of its deliverance comes. (1.) Its salvation shall not come *till after it has been desolate*, so the margin reads it, ver. 13. God has a controversy with the land, and it must lie long under his rebukes, *because of them that dwell therein*, it is their iniquity that makes their land desolate; *Psal. cvii. 34.* it is *for the fruit of their doings*; their *evil doings* which they have been themselves guilty of, and the *evil fruit of them*, the sins of others which they have been accessory to, by their ill influence and example. For this they must expect to smart a great while, for the world shall know that God hates sin even in his own people. (2.) When it doth come it shall be a compleat salvation; and it seems to refer to their deliverance out of Babylon by Cyrus, which Isaiah about this time prophesied of, as a type of our redemption by Christ. (1.) *The decree shall be far removed*; God's decree concerning their captivity, and Nebuchadnezzar's decree concerning

the perpetuity of it, his resolution never to release them, these shall be set *aside*, and revoked, and you shall hear no more of them; they shall no more lie as a yoke upon thy neck. (2.) *Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, shall be again reared*; then *thy walls shall be built*; walls for habitation, walls for defence, house walls, town walls, temple walls: It is in order to these that the decree is repealed, *Isa. xlv. 28.* Though Sion's walls may lie long in ruins, there will come a day when they shall be repaired. (3.) All that belong to the land of Israel, whithersoever *dispersed*, and howsoever *distressed*, far and wide over the face of the whole earth, shall come flocking to it again, ver. 12. *He shall come even to thee*, having liberty to return, and a heart to return, from Assyria, whither the ten tribes were carried away, though it lay remote; and *from the fortified cities, and from the fortress*, those strong holds in which they thought they had them fast, for when God's time is come, though Pharaoh will not *let the people go*, God will fetch them out with a high hand. They shall come from all the remote parts, *from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain*, not turning back for fear of your discouragements, but they shall go from strength to strength till they come to Zion. Thus in the great day of redemption, *God will gather his elect from the four winds*.

14. ¶ Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily in the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed in Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. 15. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things. 16. ¶ The nations shall see, and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth, their ears shall be deaf. 17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the LORD our God, and shall fear because of thee. 18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. 19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. 20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Here is, 1. The prophet's prayer to God to take care of his own people, and of their cause and interest, ver. 14. When God is about to deliver his people, he stirs up their friends to pray for them, and pours out a *Spirit of grace and supplication*, *Zech. xii. 10.* And when we see God coming towards us in ways of mercy, we must go forth to meet him by prayer. It is a *prophetical* prayer, which amounts to a promise of the good prayed for, what God directed his prophet to *ask*, no doubt he designed to give. Now, (1.) The people of Israel are here called the *flock of God's heritage*, for they are the sheep of his hand, the sheep of his pasture, his *little flock* in the world; and they are his *heritage*, his portion in the world; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. (2.) This flock *dwells solitary in the wood, or forest, in the midst of Carmel*, a high mountain; Israel was a peculiar people, that dwelt alone, and was not reckoned among the nations, like a flock of sheep in a wood. They were now a *desolate* people, ver. 13. were in the land of their captivity as sheep in a forest, in danger of being lost, and made a prey of, to the beasts of the forest. They are *scattered upon the mountains, as sheep having no shepherd*. (3.) He prays that God would *feed them there with his rod*, i. e. that he would take care of them in their captivity, would protect them, and provide for them, and do the part of a good shepherd to them. *Let thy rod and staff comfort them*, even in that *darksome valley*; and even there, let them want nothing that is good for them. Let them be governed by *thy rod*, not the rod of their enemies, for they are *thy people*. (4.) He prays that God would in due time bring them back, to feed in the plains of Bashan and Gilead, and no longer to be fed in the woods and mountains. Let them feed in their own country again, *as in the days of old*. Some apply this spiritually, and make it either the prophet's prayer to Christ, or his father's charge to him to take care of his church, as the great shepherd of the sheep, and to go in and out before them while they are here in this world, as in a wood, that they *may find pasture*, as in Carmel, as in Bashan and Gilead.

2. God's promise in answer to this prayer, and we may well take God's promises, as real answers to the prayers of faith, and embrace them accordingly, for with him *saying* and *doing* are not *two things*. The prophet prayed that God would *feed* them, and do *kind things* for them, but God answers that he will shew them *marvellous things*, ver. 15. will do for them more

than they are able to ask or think, will out-do their hopes and expectations; he will *shew them his marvellous loving kindness*, Psal. xvii. 2.

(1.) He will do that for them, which shall be the *repetition* of the wonders and miracles of former ages; according to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt. Their deliverance out of Babylon shall be a work of wonder and grace, not inferior to their deliverance out of Egypt, nay, it should eclipse the lustre of that, Jer. xvi. 14, 15. much more should the work of redemption by Christ be so. Note, God's former favours to his church, are patterns of future favours, and shall again be copied out as there is occasion.

(2.) He will do that for them, which shall be matter of wonder and amazement to the present age, ver. 16, 17. The nations about shall take notice of it, and it shall be said among the heathen, *The Lord has done great things for them*, Psal. cxxvi. 3. The impression which the deliverance of the Jews, out of Babylon shall make upon the neighbour nations, shall be very much for the honour both of God and his church. (1.) Those that had insulted over the people of God in their distress, and gloried that when they had them down they would keep them down, shall be confounded when they see them thus surprisingly rising up, they shall be confounded at all the might with which the captives shall now exert themselves, whom they thought for ever disabled. They shall now lay their hand upon their mouths, as being ashamed of what they have said, and not able to say any more, by way of triumph over Israel. Nay, their ears shall be deaf too, so much shall they be ashamed at the wonderful deliverance; they shall stop their ears, as being not willing to hear any more of God's wonders wrought for that people, which they had so despised and insulted over. (2.) Those that had impudently confronted God himself, shall now be struck with a fear of him; and thereby brought in profession at least to submit to him, ver. 17. They shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall be so mortified, as if they were sentenced to the same curse the serpent was laid under, Gen. iii. 14. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat. They shall be brought to the lowest abasement imaginable, and shall be so dispirited, that they shall tamely submit to them. His enemies shall lick the dust, Psal. lxxii. 9. Nay, they shall lick the dust of the church's feet, Isa. xlix. 23. Proud oppressors shall now be made sensible, how mean, how little they are before the great God, and they shall with trembling, and the lowest submission, move out of the holes into which they had crept, Isa. ii. 21. like worms of the earth as they are, being ashamed and afraid to shew their heads; so low shall they be brought, and such abjects shall they be when they are abased. When God did wonders for his church, many of the people of the land became Jews, because the fear of the Jews, and of their God, fell upon them, Esth. viii. 17. So it is promised here, they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of thee, O Israel. Forced submissions, are often but feigned submissions, yet they redound to the glory of God and the church, though not to the benefit of the dissemblers themselves.

3. The prophet's thankful acknowledgment of God's mercy, in the name of the church, with a believing dependence upon his promise, ver. 11, 19, 20. We are here taught,

1. To give to God the glory of his pardoning mercy, ver. 18. God having promised to bring back the captivity of his people, the prophet on that occasion admires pardoning mercy, as that which was at the bottom of it. As it was their sin that brought them into bondage, so it was God's pardoning their sin that brought them out of it, see Psal. lxxxv. 1, 2. and Isa. xxxiii. 24.—xxxviii. 17.—xl. 1, 2. The pardon of sin, is the foundation of all other covenant mercies, Heb. viii. 12. This the prophet stands amazed at, while the nations about stood amazed only at those deliverances which were but the fruits of this. Note, (1.) God's people that are the remnant of his heritage, stand charged with many transgressions; being but a remnant, a very few, one would hope they should all be very good, but they are not so, God's children have their spots, and often offend their Father. (2.) The gracious God is ready to pass by, and pardon the iniquity and transgression of his people, upon their repentance and return to him. God's people are pardoned people, and to this they owe their all. When God pardons sin he passeth it by, doth not punish it as justly he might, nor deal with the sinner according to the desert of it. (3.) Though God may for a time lay his own people under the tokens of his displeasure, yet he will not retain his anger for ever, but though he cause grief, he will have

compassion; he is not implacable; yet against those that are not of the remnant of his heritage, that are unpardoned, he will keep his anger for ever. (4.) The reasons why God pardons sin, and keeps not his anger for ever, are all taken from within himself, it is because he delighteth in mercy, and the salvation of sinners is what he has pleasure in, not their death and damnation. (5.) The glory of God in forgiving sin, is as in other things matchless, and without compare. There is no God like unto him for this; no magistrate, no common person, forgives as God doth. In this his thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours; in this he is God and not man. (6.) All those that have experienced pardoning mercy, cannot but admire that mercy; it is what we have reason to stand amazed at, if we know what it is. Has God forgiven us our transgressions? we may well say, who is a God like unto thee? Our holy wonder of pardoning mercy, will be a good evidence of our interest in it.

2. To take to ourselves the comfort of that mercy, and all that grace and truth that goes along with it. God's people here, as they look back with thankfulness upon God's pardoning their sins, so they look forward with assurance, upon what he would yet further do for them. His mercy endures for ever, and therefore as he has shewed mercy, so he will, ver. 19, 20. (1.) He will renew his favours to us, he will turn again, he will have compassion, i. e. he will again have compassion upon us, as formerly he had; his compassions shall be new every morning: he seemed to be departing from us in anger, but he will turn again and pity us. He will turn us to himself, and then will turn to us, and have mercy upon us. (2.) He will renew us, to prepare and qualify us for his favour. He will subdue our iniquities; when he takes away the guilt of sin that it may not damn us, he will break the power of sin that it may not have dominion over us; that we may not fear sin, or be led captive by it. Sin is an enemy that fights against us, a tyrant that oppresseth us, nothing less than almighty grace can subdue it, so great is its power in fallen man, and so long has it kept possession: but if God forgive the sin that has been committed by us, he will subdue the sin that dwelleth in us, and in that, there is none like him in forgiving; and all those whose sins are pardoned, earnestly desire and hope to have their corruptions mortified, and their iniquities subdued, and please themselves with the hopes of it: if we be left to ourselves, our iniquities will be too hard for us, but God's grace we trust shall be sufficient for us to subdue them, so that they shall not rule us, and then they shall not ruin us. (3.) He will confirm this good work, and effectually provide that his act of grace shall never be repealed, thou wilt cast all their sins into the depth of the sea, as when he brought them out of Egypt, (to which he has an eye in the promises here, ver. 15.) he subdued Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and cast them into the depth of the sea. It intimates, that when God forgives sin he remembers it no more, and takes care that it never be remembered more against the sinner, Ezek. xviii. 22. His transgressions shall not be mentioned unto him, they are blotted out as a cloud which never appears more. He casts them into the sea, not near the shore side where they may appear again next low water, but into the depth of the sea, never to rise again. All their sins shall be cast there without exception, for when God forgives sin he forgives all. (4.) He will perfect that which concerns us, and with this good work will do all that for us which our case requires, and which he has promised, ver. 2. Then wilt thou perform thy truth to Jacob, and thy mercy to Abraham. It is in pursuance of the covenant that our sins are pardoned, and our lusts mortified, from that spring all these streams flow, and with these he shall freely give us all things. The promise is said to be mercy to Abraham, because as made to him first it was meer mercy, preventing mercy, considering what state it found him in. But it was truth to Jacob, because the faithfulness of God was engaged to make good to him and his seed as heirs to Abraham, all that was graciously promised to Abraham. See here, (1.) With what solemnity the covenant of grace is ratified to us, it was not only spoken, written and sealed, but which is the highest confirmation, it was sworn to our fathers; nor is it a modern project, but is confirmed by antiquity too, it was sworn from the days of old; it is an ancient charter. (2.) With what satisfaction it may be applied and relied upon by us, we may say with the highest assurance, Thou wilt perform the truth and mercy, not one iota or tittle of it shall fall to the ground; faithful is he that has promised, who also will do it.

A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S,

O F T H E

P r o p h e c y o f N A H U M.

THE name of this prophet signifies a comforter; for it was a charge given to all the prophets, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; and even this prophet, tho' wholly taken up in foretelling the destruction of Nineveh, which speaks terror to the Assyrians, yet even in that, is comforter to the ten tribes of Israel, who, 'tis probable were now lately carried captives into Assyria. It is very uncertain at what time he lived and prophesied, but most probable that he lived in the time of Hezekiah, and prophesied against Nineveh, after the captivity of Israel by the king of Assyria, which was in the ninth year of Hezekiah, and before Sennacherib's invading Judah, which was in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, for to that attempt and the defeat of it it is supposed the first chapter has reference; and, it is probable, was delivered a little before it, for the encouragement of God's people, in that day of treading down and perplexity. And it is the conjecture of the learned Huetius, that the two other chapters of this book were delivered by Nahum some years after, perhaps in the reign of Manasseh, and in that reign the Jewish chronologies generally place him; somewhat nearer to the time when Nineveh was conquered, and the Assyrian monarchy reduced by Cyaxares and Nebuchadnezzar, some time before the first captivity of Judah. It is probable Nahum did by word of mouth prophesy many things concerning Israel and Judah, as it is certain Jonah did, 2 Kings xiv. 25. though we have nothing of either of them in writing, but what related to Nineveh, which though a great and ancient city, yet probably we should never have heard of in sacred writ, if the Israel of God had not had some concern in it.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have (1.) The inscription of the book, ver. 1. (2.) A magnificent display of the glory of God, in a mixture of wrath and justice against the wicked, and mercy and grace towards his people, and the discovery of his majesty and power in both, ver. 2—8. (3.) A particular application of this (as most interpreters think) to the destruction of Sennacherib and the Assyrian army, when they besieged Jerusalem, which was a very memorable and illustrious instance of the power both of God's justice and of his mercy, and spoke abundance of terror to his enemies, and encouragement to his faithful servants, ver. 9—16.

THE burthen of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

This title directs us to consider,

1. The great city against which the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the burthen of Nineveh. Not only a prophecy, and a weighty one, but a burthensome prophecy, a dead weight to Nineveh, a mill-stone hanged about its neck. Nineveh was the place concerned, and the Assyrian monarchy, which that was the royal seat of. About an hundred years before this, Jonah had in God's name foretold the speedy overthrow of this great city, but then the Ninevites repented and were spared, and that decree did not bring forth; the Ninevites then saw clearly how much it was to their advantage to turn from their evil way, it was the saving of their city, and yet soon after they returned to it again; it became worse than ever, a bloody city, and full of lies and robbery, they repented

pented of their repentance, returned with the dog to his vomit, and at length grew worse than ever they had been; then God sent them not this prophet, as Jonah, but this prophecy to read them their doom, which was now irreversible. Note, The *reprieve* will not be *continued*, if the *repentance* be not *continued* in. If men turn from the good they begun to do, they can expect no other, but that God should turn from the favour he began to shew, *Jer. xviii. 10.*

2. The *poor prophet* by whom the word of the Lord is here delivered; it is the *book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite*. The burthen of *Nineveh*, was what the prophet plainly foresaw, for it was his *vision*, and what he left upon record, it is the *book of the vision*, that when he was gone, the event might be compared with the prediction, and confirm it. All the account we have of the prophet himself is, that he was an Elkoshite, of the town called Elkes or Elcos, which St Jerom saith was in Galilee. Some observe, that the scripture ordinarily saith little of the prophets themselves, that our faith might not stand upon their authority, but upon that of the blessed Spirit by whom their prophecies were indited.

2. God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth, the LORD revengeth and is furious, the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries; and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. 3. The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. 4. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. 5. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burnt at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. 6. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

Nineveh knows not God, that God that contends with her, and therefore is here told what a God he is, and it is good for us all to mix faith with that which is here said concerning him, which speaks a great deal of terror to the wicked, and comfort to good people; for this glorious description of the Sovereign of the world, like the pillar of cloud and fire, has a bright side towards Israel, and a dark side towards the Egyptians. Let each take their portion from it, let sinners read it and tremble, let saints read it and triumph. The wrath of God is here revealed from heaven against his enemies, his favour and mercy is here assured to his faithful loyal subjects; and his almighty power in both, making his wrath very terrible, and his favour very desirable.

1. He is a God of *inflexible justice*, a *jealous God*, and will take vengeance on his enemies, let Nineveh know this, and tremble before him. Their idols are insignificant things, there is nothing formidable in them, but the God of Israel is greatly to be feared; for (1.) He *resents the affronts and indignities done him* by those that deny his being, or any of his perfections, that set up other gods in competition with him, that destroy his laws, arraign his proceedings, ridicule his word, or are abusive to his people. Let such know, that Jehovah the one only living and true God, is a *jealous God*, and a *revenger*: he is *jealous* for his own honour, in the matters of his worship, and will not endure a rival: he is *jealous* for the comfort of his worshippers, *jealous for his land*, *Joel ii. 18.* and will not have that injured. He is a *revenger*, and he is *furious*; he *hath fury*, so the word is; not as man hath it, in whom it is an ungoverned passion, so he hath said, *fury is not in me*, *Isa. xxvii. 4.* but he has it in such a way as becomes the righteous God, to put an edge upon his justice, and to make it appear more terrible to those who otherwise would stand in no awe of it. He is *Lord of anger*, so the Hebrew phrase is, for that which we read, *he is furious*: he *hath anger*, but he hath it at command, and under government; our anger is often lord over us, as theirs that have *no rule over their own spirits*, but God is always *Lord of his anger*, and *weigheth a path to it*, *Psal. lxxviii. 50.* (2.) He *resolved to reckon with those* that put those *affronts upon him*. We are told here, not only that he is a *revenger*, but that he *will take vengeance*, he hath said he will, he hath *sworn* it, *Deut. xxxii. 40, 41.* Whoever are his adversaries, and enemies among men, he will make them feel his resentments; and tho' the sentence against his enemies is not executed speedily, yet he *reserveth wrath for them*, and *reserveth them for it, in the day of wrath*. Against his own people, that repent and humble themselves before him, he *keepeth not his anger for ever*, but against his enemies he will for ever let out his anger. And, *ver. 3. He will not at all acquit the wicked*, that sin and stand to it and do not repent. Those wickedly depart from their God, that depart and never return, *Psal. xviii. 21.* and these he will not acquit. Humble supplicants will find him

gracious, but scornful beggars will not find him easy, or that the door of mercy will be opened to a loud but late, Lord, Lord. This revelation of the wrath of God against his enemies, is applied to Nineveh, *ver. 8.* and should be applied by all those to themselves, who go on still in their trespasses; *with an over-running flood, he will make an utter end of the places thereof.* The army of the Chaldeans shall over-run the country of the Assyrians, and lay it all waste: God's judgments when they come with commission, are like a deluge to any people, which they cannot keep off, or make head against. *Darkness shall pursue his enemies*, terror and trouble shall follow them whither soever they go, shall pursue them to utter darkness: if they think to flee from the darkness that pursues them, they will but fall into that which is before them.

2. He is a God of *irresistible power*, and is able to deal with his enemies, be they never so many, never so mighty, never so hardy. He is *great in power*, *ver. 3.* and therefore it is good having him our friend, and bad having him our enemy. Now here,

(1.) The power of God is asserted and proved, by divers instances of it in the kingdom of nature, where we always find its visible effects in the ordinary course of nature, and sometimes, in the surprising alterations of that course. (1.) If we look up into the regions of the air, there we shall find proofs of his power, for he *hath his ways in the whirlwind and the storm*, which way soever God goes, he carries a *whirlwind* and a *storm* along with him, for the terror of his enemies, *Psal. xviii. 9, &c.* And wherever there is a *whirlwind* and a *storm*, God has the command of it, the controll of it, makes his way through it, goes on his way in it, and serves his own purposes by it: he spoke to Job out of the whirlwind, and even stormy winds fulfil his word. He has *his way in the whirlwind*, i. e. he goes on undiscerned, and the methods of his providence are to us unaccountable, as it is said, *his way is in the sea*. The clouds are the dust of his feet, i. e. he treads on them, walks on them, raiseth them when he pleaseth, as a man with his feet raiseth a cloud of dust. It is but by permission, or usurpation rather, that the devil is the prince of the power of the air, for that power is in God's hand. (2.) If we cast our eye upon the great deeps, there we find that the sea is his, for he made it; for when he pleaseth, he *rebuketh the sea and maketh it dry, by drying up all the rivers* with which it is continually supplied. He gave those proofs of his power when he divided the Red-sea, and Jordan, and can do the same again when ever he pleaseth. (3.) If we look round us on this earth, we find proofs of his power, when either by the extream heat and drought of summer, or the cold and frost of winter, *Bashan languisheth, and Carmel and the flower of Lebanon languisheth*, the choicest and strongest flower languisheth. His power is often seen in earthquakes which shake the mountains, *ver. 5.* melt the hills, and melt them down, and level them with the plains. When he pleaseth, *the earth is burnt at his presence*, by the scorching heat of the sun, and he could burn it with fire from heaven, as he did Sodom, and at the end of time he will burn the world, and all that dwell therein. The earth and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Thus *great is the Lord, and of great power*.

(2.) This is particularly applied to his anger. If God be an almighty God, we may from thence infer, *ver. 6. Who can stand before his indignation?* The Ninevites had once found God *slow to anger*, as he saith, *ver. 3.* and perhaps presumed upon the mercy they had then had experience of, and thought they might make bold with him, but they will find he is just and jealous, as well as merciful and gracious, and having shewed the justice of his wrath, in the next he shews the power of it, and the utter insufficiency of his enemies to contend with him. It is in vain for the stoutest and strongest of sinners, to think to make their part good against the power of God's anger. (1.) See God here as a *consuming fire*, terrible and mighty. Here is his indignation against sin, and the *fierceness of his anger*, his fury poured out, not like water, but like fire, like the fire and brimstone rained on Sodom, *Psal. xi. 6.* Hell is the fierceness of God's anger, *Rev. xvi. 19.* God's anger is so fierce, that it beats down all before it, *the rocks are thrown down by him*, that seemed unmoveable; rocks have sometimes been rent by the eruption of subterraneous fires, which is a faint resemblance of the fierceness of God's anger, against sinners whose hearts are rocky, for none ever hardened their hearts against him and prospered. (2.) See sinners here, as stubble before the fire, weak and impotent, and a very unequal match for the wrath of God. (1.) They are utterly unable to *bear up against it*, so as to resist it, and put by the strokes of it. *Who can stand before his indignation?* Not the proudest and most daring sinner; not the world of the ungodly, no, not the angels that sinned. (2.) They are utterly unable to bear up under it, so as to keep up their spirits, and preserve any enjoyment of themselves. *Who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?* As it is *irresistible*, so it is intolerable. Some of the effects of God's displeasure in this world a man may bear up under, but the *fierceness of his anger*, when it fastens immediately upon the soul, who can bear it? Let us therefore *fear before him*, let us *stand in awe, and not sin*.

3. He is a God of *infinite mercy*; and in the midst of all this wrath mercy is remembered. Let the sinners in Zion be afraid, that

that go on still in their transgressions, but let not those that trust in God tremble before him. For, (1.) He is *slow to anger*, ver. 3. not easily provoked, but ready to shew mercy to those who have offended him, and to receive them into favour upon their repentance. (2.) When the tokens of his rage against the wicked are abroad, he takes care for the safety and comfort of his own people, ver. 7. *The Lord is good to those that are good*, and to them he will be a *strong hold in the day of trouble*. Note, The same almighty power that is exerted for the terror and destruction of the wicked, is engaged and shall be employed for the protection and satisfaction of his own people; he is able both to save and to destroy. In the day of publick trouble, when God's judgments are in the earth laying all waste, he will be a place of defence to those, who by faith put themselves under his protection, those that *trust in him* in the way of their duty, that live a life of dependence upon him, and devotedness to him, he *knows them*, he owns them for his, he takes cognizance of their case, knows what is best for them, and what course to take most effectually for their relief. They are, perhaps, obscure, and little regarded in the world, but *the Lord knows them*, Psal. i. 6.

9. What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. 10. For while *they be folden together as thorns*, and while they are drunken *as drunkards*, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry. 11. There is *one* come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the LORD: a wicked counsellor. 12. Thus saith the LORD, Though *they be quiet*, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through: though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more. 13. For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder. 14. And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, *that no more of thy name be sown*: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image, and the molten image, I will make thy grave, for thou art vile. 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee, he is utterly cut off.

These verses seem to point at the destruction of the army of the Assyrians under Sennacherib, which may well be reckoned a part of the burden of Nineveh, the head city of the Assyrian empire; and a pledge to the destruction of Nineveh it self, about an hundred years after: and this was an event, which Isaiah, with whom probably this prophet was cotemporary, spoke much of. Now observe here,

1. The *great provocation* which the Assyrians gave to God, the *just and jealous God*, for which, tho' *slow to anger*, he would take vengeance, ver. 11. *There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord*; Sennacherib and his spokesman Rabshakah; they framed an evil letter and an evil speech, not only against Hezekiah and his people, but against God himself; reflecting upon him, as level with the gods of the heathen, and unable to protect his worshippers, dissuading his people from putting a confidence in him, and urging them rather to put themselves under the protection of the *great king, the king of Assyria*; they contrived to alter the property of Jerusalem, that it should be no longer the city of the Lord, the holy city. This one, this mighty one, so he thinks himself, that comes out of Nineveh, *imagining evil against the Lord*, brings upon Nineveh this burden; never was the glorious Majesty of heaven and earth, more daringly, more blasphemously, affronted, than by Sennacherib at that time: he was a *wicked counsellor*, who counselled them to despair of God's protection, and surrender themselves to the king of Assyria, and endeavoured to put them out of conceit with Hezekiah's reformation, Isa. xxxvi. 7. with this wicked counsellor, he here expostulates, ver. 9. *What do ye imagine against the Lord?* What a foolish wicked thing is it for you to plot against God, as if you could out-wit divine wisdom, and over-power omnipotence it self. Note, There is a great deal imagined against the Lord, by the gates of hell, and against the interests of his kingdom in the world; but it will prove a *vain thing*, Psal. ii. 1, 2. He that sits in heaven laughs at the imaginations of the pretenders to politicks against him, and will turn their counsels headlong.

2. The *great destruction* which God would bring upon them for it; not presently, upon the whole monarchy, the ruin of that was deferred, till the measure of their iniquity was full. But, (1.) upon the army, God will *make an utter end* of that; it shall be totally cut off and ruined at one blow; one fatal stroke of the

destroying angel shall lay them dead upon the spot; *affliction shall not rise up the second time*, for it shall not need. With some sinners God makes a quick dispatch, doth their business *at once*; divine vengeance goes not by one certain rule; nor in one constant tract; but one way or other by *acute diseases*, or *chronical ones*, by slow deaths or lingring ones, he will *make an utter end* of all his enemies, who persist in their *imaginations* against him. We have reason to think, that the Assyrian army were mostly of the same spirit, and spoke the same language with their general, and now God would take them to task; tho' they did but say as they were taught: and it shall appear, that they have laid themselves open to divine wrath, by their own act and deed, ver. 10. (1.) They are *as thorns* that entangle one another; and are *folden together*, they make one another worse, and more inveterate against God and his Israel, harden one anothers hearts and strengthen one anothers hands in their impiety; and therefore God will do with them, as the husbandman doth with a bush of thorns, when he cannot part them, he puts them all into the fire together. (2.) They are *as drunken men*, intoxicated with pride and rage, and such as they shall be irrecoverably *overthrown and destroyed*. They shall be as *drunkards*, befotted to their own ruin, and shall stumble and fall, and make themselves a reproach and be justly laughed at. (3.) They shall be *devoured as stubble fully dry*, which is irresistibly and irrecoverably consumed by the flame. The judgments of God are as devouring fire, to those that make themselves *as stubble* to them. It is again threatened concerning this great army, ver. 12. that, *tho' they be quick and likewise many*, very secure, not fearing the fallies out of the besieged upon them, because *they are numerous*, yet *thus shall they be cut down*, or *certainly shall they be cut down*, as grafs and corn are cut down, with as little ado, when *he shall pass through*, even the destroying angel, that is commissioned to cut them down. Note, The security of sinners, and their confidence in their own strength, is often a preface of ruin approaching. (2.) The destruction comes upon the king, he *imagined evil against the Lord*, and shall he escape! No, ver. 14. *The Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee*, the decree is gone forth, *that thy name be no more sown*, that thy memory perish, and that thou be no more talked of, as thou hast been, and the report of thy mighty actions dispersed upon the wings of fame, and celebrated with her trumpet. Because Sennacherib's son reigned in his stead, some make this to point at the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, and not long after. Note, They that *imagine evil against the Lord*, hasten evil upon themselves and their own families and interests, and ruin their own names by dishonouring his name. It is further threatened, (1.) Those the images he worshipped should be cut off from their temple; the *graven image* and the *molten image out of the house of his gods*, which some think was fulfilled when Sennacherib was slain by his two sons, *as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god*; by which barbarous parricide, we may suppose, the temple was looked upon as defiled, and was therefore *disused*, and the images *cut off* from it, the worshippers of those images no longer attending there. Or, it may be taken more generally, to speak the utter ruin of Assyria; the army of the enemy shall lay all waste, and not spare even the images of their gods, by which God would intimate to them, that one of the grounds of his controversy with them is their idolatry. (2.) That Sennacherib's grave shall be made there, some think in the house of his god, there he is slain, and there he shall be buried, for *he is vile*; he lies under this perpetual mark of disgrace, that he had so far lost his interest in the natural affection of his own children, that two of them murdered him. Or, it may be meant of the ignominious fall of the Assyrian monarchy it self, upon the ruins of which, that of Babylon was raised, what a noise was made about the grave of that once formidable state, but now despicable, is largely described, Ezek. xxxi. 3, 11, 15, 16. Note, Those that make themselves vile by scandalous sins, God will make them vile by shameful punishments.

3. The *great deliverance* which God would hereby work for his own people, and the city that was called by his name. The ruin of the church's enemies is the salvation of the church, and a very great salvation it was, that was wrought for Jerusalem by the overthrow of Sennacherib's army. (1.) The siege shall hereby be raised; *now will I break his yoke from off thee*, by which thou art kept in servitude, and *will burst thy bonds in sunder*, by which thou seemest bound over to the Assyrian's wrath: that vast victorious army, when it forced free quarters for it self, throughout all the land of Judah, and lived at discretion there, was as *yokes and bonds* upon them. Jerusalem when it was *besieged*, was as it were bound and fettered by it, but when the destroying angel had done his work, *Jerusalem's bonds were burst asunder*, and it was set at liberty again: this was a figure of the great salvation, by which the Jerusalem that is *above*, is *made free*, is *made free indeed*. (2.) The enemy shall be so weakened and dispirited, that they shall never make any such attempt again, and the end of this trouble so well gained by the grace of God, that there shall be no more occasion for such a severe correction. (1.) God will not again afflict Jerusalem, his anger is *turned away*, and he saith, *it is enough*; for he has by this fright *accomplished*

plished his whole work upon mount Zion, Isa. x. 12. and therefore, *tho' I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more*; the bitter potion shall not be repeated, unless there be need, and the patient's case calls for it; for God *doth not afflict willingly*. (2.) The enemy shall not dare again to attack Jerusalem, ver. 15. *The wicked shall no more pass through thee* as they have done, to lay all waste, for he is utterly cut off, and disabled to do it. His army is cut off, his spirit cut off, and at length he himself cut off. Lastly, The tidings of this great deliverance shall be published, and welcomed with abundance of joy throughout the kingdom, ver. 15. while Sennacherib prevailed and carried all before him, every day brought ill news; but now, *behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, the feet of the evangelist*; he is seen coming at a distance, upon the mountains, as fast as his feet will carry him, and how pleasant a sight is it, once more to see a messenger of peace, after we have received so many of Job's messengers? We find these words made use of by another prophet, to illustrate the mercy of the deliverance of the people of God, out of Babylon, Isa. lii. 7. not that the prophets stole the word one from another, (as those did, Jer. xxiii. 30.) but, speaking by the same Spirit, they often used the same expressions: and it may be of good use for ministers to testify their consent to *wholesome truths*, (1 Tim. vi. 3.) by concurring in the *same forms of sound words*, 2 Tim. i. 13. These words are also quoted by the apostle, both from Isaiah and Nahum, and applied to the great redemption, wrought out for us by our Lord Jesus, and the publishing of it to the world by the everlasting gospel, Rom. x. 15. Christ's ministers are those messengers of good tidings, that preach peace by Jesus Christ; how beautiful are the feet of those messengers? how welcome their message, to those that see their misery and danger by reason of sin? And observe, he that brings these good tidings, brings with them a call to Judah to keep her solemn feasts and perform her vows. During the trouble, (1.) The ordinary feasts had been intermitted, *Inter arma silent leges*; while Jerusalem was compassed with armies, they could not go thither to worship, but now the embargo is taken off, they must return to the observation of their feasts; and the feasts of the Lord will then be doubly sweet to the people of God, when they have been for some time deprived of the benefit of them, and God graciously restores them their opportunities again; for we are taught the worth of such mercies by the want of them. (2.) They had made vows to God, that if he would deliver them out of this distress, they would do something extraordinary in his service, to his honour, and now the deliverance is wrought, they are called upon to perform their vows; the promise they had then made, must now be made good, for better it is not to vow, than to vow and not to pay. And those words, *The wicked shall no more pass through thee*, may be taken as a promise of the perfecting the good work of reformation, which Hezekiah had begun; the wicked shall not, as they have done, walk on every side, but they shall be cut off. And then the baffling of the attempts from the wicked enemies abroad, is a mercy indeed to a nation, when it is accompanied with the restraint and reformation of the wicked at home, that are its more dangerous enemies.

C H A P. II.

We now come closer to Nineveh that great city; she took not warning by the destruction of her armies, and the fall of her king, and therefore may expect, since she persists in her enmity to God, that he will proceed in his controversy with her. Here is foretold, (1.) The approach of the enemy that should destroy Nineveh, and the terror of his military preparations, ver. 1—5. (2.) The taking the city, ver. 6. (3.) The captivity of the queen, the flight of the inhabitants, the siezing of all the wealth of it, and the mighty consternation it should be in, ver. 7—10. (4.) All this is run up to its true causes, their sinning against God, and God's appearing against them, ver. 11—13. All this was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar in the first year of his reign, in conjunction with Cyaxares, or Abasuerus king of the Medes conquered Nineveh, and made himself master of the Assyrian monarchy.

1. **H**E that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. 2. For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine-branches. 3. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and

the fir-trees shall be terribly shaken. 4. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. 5. He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk: they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. 6. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved. 7. And Huzzah shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabring upon their breasts. 8. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back. 9. Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store, and glory out of all the pleasant furniture. 10. She is empty, and void, and waste, and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

Here is 1. *An alarm of war sent to Nineveh*, ver. 1. The prophet speaks of it as just at hand, for it is neither doubtful, nor far distant; look about thee and see, *He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face*; Nebuchadnezzar that is noted, and will be yet more so, for *dashings nations in pieces*, begins with thee, and will dissipate and disperse thee, so some render the word. Babylon is called the *hammer of the whole earth*, Jer. i. 23. The attempt of Nebuchadnezzar upon Nineveh is publick, bold, and daring, he is come up before thy face, avowing his design to ruin thee. And therefore stand to thine arms, O Nineveh; keep the munition, secure thy towers and magazines, watch the way, set guards upon all the avenues to the city, make thy loins strong, encourage thy soldiers, animate thyself and them, fortify thy power mightily, as cities use to do when an enemy is advancing against them; this is spoken ironically, do the utmost thou canst, yet thou shalt not be able to put by the stroke of this judgment, for there is no counsel or strength against the Lord.

2. *A manifesto published shewing the causes of the war*, ver. 2. The Lord has turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel, i. e. 1. The Assyrians have been abusive to Jacob, the two tribes, have humbled and mortified them, as well as to Israel, the ten tribes, have emptied them, and marred their vine branches, and for this God will reckon with them, though done long since, it shall come into the account now against that kingdom, and Nineveh the head city of it; God's quarrel with them is for the violence done to Jacob. Or, 2. God is now by Nebuchadnezzar, about to turn away the pride of Jacob, by the captivity of the two tribes, as he did the pride of Israel, by their captivity, he has done it, he has determined to do it, to bring emptiers upon them, and the enemy that is to do it must begin with Nineveh, and reduce that first, and humble the pride of that. God is looking upon proud cities and abasing them, even those that were nearest to him; Samaria is humbled, and Jerusalem is to be humbled, and their pride brought low, and shall not Nineveh that proud city be brought down too? Emptiers have emptied the cities, and marred the vine branches in the country of Jacob and Israel, and must not the excellency of Nineveh, that is so much her pride, be turned away too?

3. A particular given in of the terrors wherein the invading enemy shall appear against Nineveh, every thing shall contribute to make him formidable. (1.) The shields of his mighty men are made red, and probably their other arms and array; as if they were already tinged with the blood they had shed, or intended hereby to signify they would put all to the sword; they hung out a red flag in token that they would give no quarter. (2.) The valiant men are in scarlet; not only red clothes, to intimate what bloody work they designed to make, but rich clothes, to intimate the wealth of the army, and that is the sinews of war. (3.) The chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, when they are making their approaches, they shall fly as swift as lightning, the wheels shall strike fire upon the stones, and those that drive them shall drive furiously, with a flaming indignation, as Jehu drove. Or they carried flaming torches with them in the open chariots, when they made their approach in the night, as Gideon's soldiers carried lamps in their pitchers, both to be a guide to themselves, and a terror to their enemies, and with them to set all on fire wherever they went. (4.) The fir-trees shall be terribly shaken, the great men of Nineveh that overtop their neighbours, as the stately firs do the shrubs; or the very standing trees shall be made to shake by the violent concussions of the earth, which that great army shall cause. (5.) The chariots of war shall be very terrible, ver. 4. They shall rage in the streets, i. e. Those that drive them, shall rage, you would think the chariots themselves raged; they shall be so numerous, and drive with so much fury, that even in the broad ways, where one would think there should be room enough, they shall jostle one another; and these iron chariots shall be made so bright,

bright, that in the beams of the sun *they shall seem like torches* in the night, *they shall run like the lightnings*, so swiftly, so furiously. Nebuchadnezzar's commanders are here called his *worthies*, his *gallants*, so the margin reads it, his *heroes*, those *he shall recount*, and order them immediately and without fail, to render themselves at their respective posts, for he is entering upon action, is resolved to take the field presently, and to open the campaign with the siege of Nineveh. *His worthies shall remember*, so some read it, they shall be mindful of the duty of their place, and the charge they have received; and shall thereby be made so intent upon their business, that they *shall stumble in their walks*, shall make more haste than good speed; they *stumble* but shall not *fall*; for *they shall make haste to the wall thereof*, shall open the trenches, and the *defence*, or the covered way shall be prepared, something to shelter them from the darts of the besieged; and they shall so closely carry on the siege, and with so much vigour, that at length the *gates of the rivers shall be opened*, ver. 6. *i. e.* Those gates of Nineveh which open upon the river Tigris (on which Nineveh was built) shall be first forced by, or betrayed to the enemy, and by those gates they shall enter. And then the *palace shall be dissolved*, either the king's house, or the house of Nisroch his god; the same word signifies both a palace and temple. When the God of heaven goes forth to contend with a people, neither the palaces nor their kings, neither the temples nor their gods can protect and shelter them, but must all inevitably fall with them.

4. A prediction of the consequences of this; and it is easy to guess how dismal those will be; (1.) The queen shall fall into the hands of the enemy, ver. 7. Huzzah shall be *led away captive*, she that was *established* (so some read it) thought herself safe, because she was concealed, and shut up in secret, shall be *discovered*, so the margin reads it, and shall be *led away captive* in greater disgrace than that of common prisoners; she shall be *brought up* in a mock-state, and *her maids of honour shall lead her*, because she is weak and fainty, not able to bear such frights and hardships, which are doubly hard and frightful to those that have not been used to them; they shall attend her not to speak cheerfully to her, and to encourage her, but murmuring and moaning themselves, as *with the voice of doves*, the *doves of the vallies*, Ezek. vii. 16. noted for their mourning, Isa. xxxviii. 14. —lix. 11. They shall be *tabring upon their breasts*, beating their own breasts in grief and vexation, as if they were *drumming* upon them, for so the word signifies. (2.) The inhabitants though numerous, shall none of them be able to make head against the invaders, or stand their ground, ver. 8. *Nineveh is of old like a pool of water*, replenished with people as a pool with water, (and *waters* signify *multitudes*, Rev. xvii. 15.) or as those waters with *fish*, it was long ago a *populous* city, in Jonah's time there were an hundred and twenty thousand little children in it, Jon. iv. 6. and ordinarily cities and countries are increasing in their number every year, but though they have so many hands to be employed in the publick service, yet they shall not be able to inspire one another with courage, but *they shall flee away like cowards*. Their commanders shall do what they can to animate them, they shall cry, *stand, stand*, have a good heart on it, and we shall do well enough, *but none shall* so much as *look back*, they shall have not the least spark of courage remaining, but every one shall think it his wisest course, to make their best of the opportunity to escape; they shall not so much as look back to see who calls for them. Note, God can dispirit the strongest and boldest in the day of distress, so that they shall not be what one would expect from them, but *like a pool of water*, the water whereof is dried up and gone. (3.) The wealth of the city shall become a prey, and all its rich furnitures shall fall into the hands of the victorious enemy, ver. 9. they shall thus animate and excite one another to plunder, *Take the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold*; thus the officers shall stir up the soldiers to improve their opportunity; here is silver and gold enough for them, for *there is no end of the store of money and plate*, Nineveh having been *of old like a pool of water*, has gathered a vast deal of mud; and abundance of *glory* it has *out of all the pleasant furniture*, all the *vessels of desire*, which they have *gloried in*, and which shall now be a *prey* and a *pride* to the conquerors. Note, Those who prepare raiment as the clay, and heap up silver as the dust, know not who may put on the raiment, and divide the silver, Job. xxvii. 16, 17. Thus this *rich* city is *empty*, and *void*, and *waste*, ver. 10. See the vanity of worldly wealth, instead of defending its owners, it does but expose them, and enable their enemies to do them so much the more mischief. (4.) The soldiers and people shall have no heart to appear for the defence of the city. Their spirits shall *melt away like wax* before the fire, *their knees shall smite together*, as Belshazzar's did in his agony, Dan. v. 6. so that they shall not be able to stand their ground, no, nor to make their escape, *much pain shall be in all joints*, as useth to be in extrem frights, so that they shall not be able to hold up their backs. And the *faces of them all shall gather blackness*, like that of a pot that is every day over the fire, so the word signifies. Note, Guilt in the conscience, will fill men with terror in an evil day, and those who place their happiness in the wealth of this world, and set their hearts upon it, think themselves undone when their silver and their gold, and their pleasant furniture is taken from them.

11. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions? where the lion *even* the old lion walked, *and* the lions whelp, and none made *them* afraid. 12. The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. 13. Behold I *am* against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions, and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Here we have Nineveh's ruin,

1. *Triumphed in* by its neighbours, who now remember against it, all the oppressions and abuse of power it had been guilty of in its pomp and prosperity, ver. 11, 12. *Where is the dwelling of the lions?* It is gone, there appear no remnants, no foot-steps of it; *Where is the feeding place of the young lions*, where they glutted themselves with prey? The princes of Nineveh had been as *lions*, as beasts of prey, cruel tyrants are no better, nay, in this respect much worse; that being men, humanity is expected from them; nay, if they were indeed lions, they would not prey upon those of their own kind, *sevis inter se convenit urfis*, but in the shape of men they have the cruelty of lions: they *walked* in Nineveh as a lion in the woods, and *none made them afraid*, every one stood in awe of them, and they were under no apprehensions of danger from any; though no body loved them, every body feared them, and that was all they desired, *oderint dum metuant*; the king himself and every prince made it his business, by all the arts of violence and extortion, to enrich himself and raise his family; he did *tear in pieces enough for his whelps* (and no little would be enough for them) and he *strangled for his lionesses*, killed all that came near him, and siezed what they had for his children, for his wives and concubines, and *filled his holes with prey*, and *his dens with ravin*, as lions use to do. Note, Many make it an excuse for their rapin and injustice, that they have wives and children to provide for, whereas what is so got will never do them any good; they that *fear the Lord*, and get what they have honestly, shall not want a competency for themselves and theirs, *verily they shall be fed*; when the *young lions*, though dens and holes were *filled with prey* and *rapin* for them, shall *lack* and *suffer hunger*, Plal. xxxiv. 10.

2. It is *avowed* by the righteous Judge of heaven and earth, it is his doing, and let all the world take notice that it is so, ver. 13. *Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts*. And what good can hosts do for her in her defence, when the *Lord of hosts* is against her for her destruction? The oppressors in Nineveh thought they only set their neighbours *against them*, who were not a match for them, and whom they could easily overpower, but it proved they *set God against them*, who is, and will be, the asserter of right, and the avenger of wrong. God is against the princes of Nineveh, and then, (1.) These military preparations will stand them in no stead. *I will burn her chariots in the smoke*, he doth not say *in the fire*, but in contempt to them, the very *smoke* of God's indignation, shall serve to burn *their chariots*; they shall be consumed as soon as the fire of his indignation is kindled, while as yet it doth but smoke, and not flame out. Or the drivers of the chariots shall be smothered and stifled with the smoke; then the *chariots of their glory*, shall be the *shame* of their families, Isa. xxii. 18. (2.) Their children, the hopes of their families, shall be cut off, *the sword shall devour the young lions*, whom they were so solicitous to provide for by oppression and extortion. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of their children, or (which is all one) of comfort in them that take sinful courses to enrich them, and (as has been said of some) damn their souls to make their sons gentlemen. (3.) The wealth they have heaped up by fraud and violence, shall neither be *enjoyed* by them, nor *employed* for them. *I will cut off by prey from the earth*, not only thou shalt not be the better for it, but no one else shall. Some understand it of the disabling of them for the future, to prey upon their neighbours. (4.) Their agents abroad shall not have that respect from the neighbours, and that influence upon them, which sometimes they had had. *The voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard*, no more be heeded. Which some think refers to Rabshakeh, one of Nineveh's messengers, that had blasphemed the living God, an iniquity which was remembered against Nineveh long after. Those are not worthy to be heard again, that have once spoken reproachfully of God.

C H A P. III.

This chapter goes on with the burthen of Nineveh, and concludes it.

(1.) *The sins of that great city are charged upon it, murder, ver. 1. whoredom and witchcraft, ver. 4. and a general extent of wickedness, ver. 19. (2.) Judgments are here threatened against it, blood for blood, ver. 2, 3. and shame for shameful sins, ver. 5, 6, 7. (3.) Instances are given of the like desolations, brought upon other places for the like sins, ver. 8—11. (4.) The overthrow of all those things, which they depended upon, and put confidence in, is foretold, ver. 12—19.*

1. **W**O to the bloody city, it is all full of lyes and robbery, the prey departeth not. 2. The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots. 3. The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword, and the glittering spear, and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases; and there is none end of their corpses: they stumble upon their corpses: 4. Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the well-favoured harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts. 5. Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will discover thy skirts upon thy face, and I will shew the nations thy nakedness, and the kingdoms thy shame. 6. And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazing-stock. 7. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee, shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee.

Here is, 1. Nineveh arraigned and indicted; it is a high charge that is here drawn up against that great city, and neither her numbers nor her grandeur shall secure her from prosecution. (1.) It is a *city of blood*, i. e. in which a great deal of innocent blood is shed, which the righteous God will make inquisition for; either by unrighteous war, or under colour and pretence of publick justice, or by suffering barbarous murders to go unpunished. (2.) It is *all full of lyes*, truth is banished from among them, there is no such thing as honesty, one knows not whom to believe, and whom to trust. (3.) It is *all full of robbery* and rapin, no man cares what mischief he doth, nor to whom he doth it; *The prey departeth not*, i. e. they never know when they have got enough by spoil and oppression. They shed blood and told lyes in pursuit of the prey, that they might enrich themselves. (4.) There is a *multitude of whoredoms* in it, i. e. idolatries, spiritual whoredoms, by which she defiled herself, and to which she seduced the neighbour nations, as a well-favoured harlot, and sold and ruined nations through her whoredoms. (5.) She is a *mistress of witchcrafts*, and by them she sells families, ver. 4. That which Nineveh aimed at, was an universal monarchy, to be the metropolis of the world, and to have all her neighbours under her feet; to compass this, she used not only arms but arts, compelling some, but deluding others into subjection to her, and wheedling them as a harlot by her charms, to lay their necks under her yoke, suggesting to them that it would be for their advantage; she courted them to join with her in her idolatrous rites, to tie them the faster to her interests; and made use of her wealth, power, and greatness, to draw people into alliances with her, by which she gained advantages over them, and made a hand of them. These were her *whoredoms* like those of Tyre, *Isa.* xxiii. 15, 17. These were her *witchcrafts*, with which she unaccountably gained dominion. And for this, that God has a quarrel with her, who having made of one blood all nations of men, never designed one to be a nation of tyrants, and another of slaves, and who claims it as his own prerogative to be universal monarch.

2. Nineveh condemned to ruin upon this indictment. Wo to this bloody city, ver. 1. See what this wo is.

1. Nineveh had with her *cruelties* been a terror and destruction to others, and therefore *destruction* and *terror* shall be brought upon her: Those that are for overthrowing all that come in their way, will sooner or later meet with their match. (1.) *Hear the alarm* with which Nineveh shall be terrified, ver. 2. It is a formidable army that advanceth against it, you may hear them at a distance, the *noise of the whip*, driving the chariot-horses with fury, hear the noise of the rattling of the wheels, the prancing

horses, and the jumping chariots, the very noise is frightful, but much more so when they know that all this force is coming with all this speed against them, and they are not able to make head against it. (2.) *See the slaughter*, with which Nineveh shall be laid waste, ver. 3. the sword drawn, with which execution shall be done, *the bright sword lifted up*, and the *glittering spear*, the dazzling brightness of which, is very terrible to those whom they are lifted up against; see what havock these make, when they are commissioned to slay, *there is a great number of carcases*, for the slain of the land shall be many, *there is no end of their corpses*, there is such a multitude of slain, that it is in vain to go about to take the number of them, they lie so thick, that passengers are ready to stumble upon their corpses at every step; the destruction of Sennacherib's army, which in the morning were all dead corpses, is perhaps looked upon here, as a figure of the like destruction that should afterwards be in Nineveh; for they that will not take warning by judgments at a distance, shall have them come nearer.

2. Nineveh had with her *whoredoms* and *witchcrafts*, drawn others to *shameful wickedness*, and therefore God will load her with *shame* and *contempt*, ver. 5, 6, 7. The *Lord of hosts* is against her, and then she shall be exposed to the highest degree of disgrace and ignominy, shall not only lose all her charms, but shall be made to appear very odious. When it shall be seen, that while she courted her neighbours, it was with design to ruin their liberty and property, when all her wicked artifices shall be brought to light, then her *shame is discovered to the nations*. When her proud pretensions are baffled, and her vain towering hopes of an absolute and universal dominion brought to nought, and she appears not to have been so strong and considerable as she would have been thought to be, then *to see the nakedness of the land do they come*, and it appears ridiculous. Then do they cast *abominable filth upon her*, as upon a carted whore, and make her vile as the off-scouring of all things; that great city, which all the nations had made court to, and coveted an alliance with, is become a *gazing stock*, a laughing stock: They that when time was, looked upon her, and fled to her in hopes of protection from her, now *look upon her, and flee from her*, for fear of being ruined with her. Note, Those that abuse their honour and interest, will justly be disgraced and abandoned, and because *miserable*, will be made *contemptible*, and thereby be made more *miserable*. When Nineveh is laid waste, *who will bemoan her?* Her trouble will be so great, and her sense of it so deep, as not to admit relief from sympathy, or any comforting considerations; or if it would, none shall do any such good office, *whence shall I seek comforters for thee?* Note, Those that shewed no pity in the day of their power, can expect to find no pity in the day of their fall. When those about Nineveh that had been deceived by her wiles, come to be undeceived in her ruin, every one shall insult over her, and none bemoan her. This was Nineveh's fate, when she was made a *spectacle* or *gazing-stock*. Note, The greater mens *shew* was in the day of their abused prosperity, the greater will their *shame* be in the day of their deserved destruction. *I will make thee an example*, so Drusus reads it. Note, When proud sinners are humbled and brought down, it is designed that others should take example by them, not to lift up themselves in security and insolence, when they prosper in the world.

8. Art thou better then populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea? 9. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite, Put and Lubim were thy helpers. 10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains. 11. Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy. 12. All thy strong holds shall be like fig-trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater. 13. Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the fire shall devour thy bars. 14. Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brick-kiln. 15. There shall the fire devour thee: the sword shall cut thee off: it shall eat thee up like the canker-worm: make thy self many as the canker-worm, make thy self many as the locusts. 16. Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker-worm spoileth and flieth away. 17. Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in

in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are. 18. Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. 19. There is no healing of thy bruise: thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?

Nineveh has been told that God is against her, and then none can be for her to stand her in any stead, yet she sets God himself at defiance, and his power and justice, and faith, *she shall have peace*. Threatened folks live long; therefore here the prophet largely shows how vain her confidences would prove, and insufficient to ward off the judgment of God.

To convince them of this,

1. He shews them, that other places which had been as strong and as secure as they, yet could not keep their ground against the judgments of God. Nineveh shall fall unpitied and uncomfortable (for miserable comforters will they prove, that speak peace to those on whom God will fasten trouble) and she shall not be able to help herself; for *Art thou better than populous No?* ver. 8. He takes them off from their vain confidences by quoting precedents: The city instanced is No, a great city in the land of Egypt, *Jer. xli. 25.* No-Ammon, so some read it, both there and here. We read of it, *Ezek. xxx. 14, 15, 16.* Some think it was Diospolis, others Alexandria: As God said to Jerusalem, Go, see what I did to Shiloh, *Jer. vii. 12.* so to Nineveh that great city, Go, see what I did to *populous No*. Note, It will help to keep up in us, a holy fear of the judgments of God, to consider that we are not better than those, that have fallen under those judgments before us: We deserve them *as much*, and are *as little* able to grapple with them. This also should help to reconcile us to afflictions; are we better than such and such that were in like manner exercised, nay, were not they better than us, and less likely to be so afflicted? Now concerning No, observe,

(1.) How firm her standing seemed to be, ver. 8. She was fortified both by nature and art, was *situate among the rivers*, Nile in several branches not only watered her fields, but guarded her wall, *her rampart was the sea*, the lake of Mareotis, an Egyptian sea, like the sea of Tiberias, *her wall was from the sea*, it was fenced with a wall which was thought to make the place impregnable; it was also supported by its interests and alliances abroad, ver. 9. Ethiopia or Arabia were *her strength*, either by the wealth they brought to her in a way of trade, or by the auxiliary forces they furnished her with for military service; the whole country of Egypt also contributed to the strength of this populous city; so that it was *infinite*; and there was no end of it; so it might be rendered, she set no bounds to her ambition, and knew no end of her wealth and strength; people flocked to her endlessly, and she thought there never would be any end of it, but it is God's prerogative to be infinite. Put and Lubim were thy helpers, two neighbouring countries of Africa, Mauritania, and Lybia, viz. Lybia Cyrenica, a country that Egypt had much dependence upon, No thus helped, seemed to sit as a queen, and was not likely to see any sorrow. But,

(2.) See how fatal her fall proved to be, ver. 10. Yet was she carried away, and her strength failed her; even she that was so strong, so secure, yet went into captivity. This refers to some destruction of that city, which was then well known, and probably fresh in memory, though not recorded in history; for the destruction of it by Nebuchadnezzar (if we should understand this prophetically) could not be made an example to Nineveh, for the reducing of Nineveh was one of the first of his victories, and that of Egypt one of the last. The strength and grandeur of that great city could not be its protection from military execution:

(1.) Not from that which was most barbarous; for, *her young children had no compassion shewed them, but were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets*, by the merciless conquerors. (2.) Not from that which was most inglorious and disgraceful; they cast lots for her honourable men, that were made prisoners of war, who should have them for their slaves, so many had they of them, that they knew not what to do with them, but they made sport with throwing dice for them; *all her great men*, that used to be adorned on state-days with chains of gold, were now bound in chains of iron; they were pinioned or hand-cuffed, so the word properly signifies, not only as slaves, but as condemned malefactors. What a mortification was this to *populous No*, to have her honourable men and great men, that were her pride and confidence, thus abused! Now, from hence he infers against Nineveh, ver. 11. Thou also shalt be intoxicated, infatuated, thou also shalt reel and stagger, as drunk with the cup of the Lord's fury, that shall be put into thy hand. See *Jer. xxv. 17, 27.* *thou shalt fall and rise no more.* The cup shall go round, and come to thy turn, O Nineveh, to drink off at last, and shall be to thee as the waters of jealousy.

No. lxxvi.

2. He shews them, that all those things which they reposed a confidence in, should fail them.

1. Did the men of Nineveh trust to their own magnanimity and bravery? Their hearts should sink and fail them, *they shall be, bid, shall abscond for shame*, being in disgrace, abscond for fear; being in distress and danger; and not able to face the enemies, *because of whose strength*, and terror, having no strength of their own, they shall seek strength, shall come sneaking to their neighbours, to beg their assistance in a time of need. Thus God can cut off the spirit of princes, and take away their heart.

2. Did they depend upon their barrier, the garrisons and strong-holds they had, which were regularly fortified, and bravely manned? Those shall prove but paper-walls, and like the first-ripe figs, which, if you give the tree but a little shake, will fall into the mouth of the eater that gapes for them; so easily will all thy strong-holds be made to surrender to the advancing enemy, upon the first summons, ver. 11. Note, Strong-holds, even the strongest, are no fence against the judgments of God, when they come with commission. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and a high wall, but only in his own conceit, Prov. xviii. 10. They are supposed to make their strong-holds as strong as possible, and are challenged to do their utmost to make them tenable, and serviceable to them against the invader, ver. 14. Draw thee water for the siege, lay in great quantities of water, that that which is so necessary to the support of human life, may not be wanting; it is put here for all manner of provision, with which Nineveh is ironically bid to furnish herself, in expectation of a siege. Take never so much care that thou mayst not be starved out, and forced by famine to surrender, yet that shall not avail; fortify the strong-holds, by adding out-works to them, or putting men or arms into them, as with us by planting cannon upon them; Go into clay, and tread the mortar, and make strong the brick-kiln, take all the pains thou canst in erecting new fortifications; but it shall be all in vain, for, ver. 15. there shall even the fire devour thee, if the strong-hold be burnt, or the sword cut thee off, if it be taken by storm. It is by fire and sword that in time of war, the great devastations are made.

3. Did they put a confidence in the multitude of their inhabitants, where they reckoned their strongest walls and fortifications? their number, their valour? Alas! these shall stand them in no stead, they shall but sink the sooner under the weight of their own numbers, ver. 13. Thy people in the midst of thee are women, they have no conduct, no courage, they shall be fickle, feeble, and faint-hearted, as women commonly are, in such times of danger and distress; they shall be at their wit's end, adding to their griefs and fears by the power of their own imagination, and utterly unable to do any thing for themselves; the valiant men shall become cowards, O verè Phrygiæ, neque enim Phryges: tho' they make themselves many, (ver. 15.) as the canker-worm, and as the locust, that come in vast swarms, tho' thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven, tho' thy exchange be thronged with wealthy traders, that having so much money to stand up in defence of, and so much to lay out in the means of their defence, one would think they should give the enemy a warm reception, yet their hearts shall fail them too; tho' they be numerous as caterpillars, yet the fire and sword shall eat them up, easily and irresistibly as the canker-worm, ver. 15. They are as numerous as those wasting insects, but their enemies shall be mischievous, like them. He adds, ver. 16. The canker-worm spoileth, or spreadeth herself, and flieth away. Both the merchants and the enemies were compared to canker-worms. The enemies shall spoil Nineveh, and carry away the spoil without opposition, or any hope of recovering it. Or, the rich merchants, that have come from abroad, to settle in Nineveh, and have raised vast estates there, out of which it was hoped they would contribute largely for the defence of the city, when they see the country invaded, and the city likely to be besieged, will send away their effects, and remove themselves to some other place; will spread their wings and fly away where they may be safe, and Nineveh shall be never the better for them. Note, It is rare to find, even those that have shared with us in our joys, willing to share with us in our griefs too. The canker-worms will continue upon the field, while there is any thing to be had, but they are gone when all is gone. Those that men have got by, yet they do not care to lose by. Nineveh's merchants bid her farewell in her distress. Riches themselves are as the canker-worms, that on a sudden fly away, as the eagle towards heaven, Prov. xxiii. 5.

4. Did they put a confidence in the strength of their gates and bars? What fence will those be, against the force of the judgments of God? ver. 13. The gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies, the gates of thy rivers, chap. ii. 6. the flood-gates, or the passes and avenues, by which the enemy would make his entrance into the country; or the gates of the cities, these, tho' never so strong and well guarded, shall not answer their end, the fire shall devour thy bars, the bars of thy gates, and then they shall fly open.

5. Did they put a confidence in their king and princes? They should do them no service, ver. 17. Thy crowned are as the locusts; those that had pomp and power, as crowned heads, were enfeebled, and had no power to make resistance, when the enemy came in like a flood. Thy captains that should lead thy forces into the field,

are *great* indeed, and look *great*, but they are as the great *grasshoppers*, the *maximum quod sic* of that *species*, still they are but *grasshoppers*, worthless things that can do no service. *They camp in the hedges in the cold day*, the cold weather, but *when the sun ariseth*, they flee away and are gone, no body knows whither. So these mercenary soldiers, that lay slumbering about Nineveh, when any trouble ariseth, flee away, and shift for their own safety; *the hireling flees, because he is a hireling*. The king of *Affyria* is told, and it is a shame he needs to be told it, who might observe it himself, that *his shepherds slumber*; they have no life or spirit to appear for the flock, and are very remiss in the discharge of the duty of their place, and the trust reposed in them. *Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust*, and be buried in silence.

6. Did they hope that they should yet recover themselves, and rally again? In this also, they should be disappointed; for when the shepherds are smitten, the *sheep are scattered*; the people is dispersed *upon the mountains*, and *no man gathereth them*, nor will they ever come together of themselves, but will wander endlessly, as scattered sheep do. The judgment they are under, is as a wound,

and it is incurable; there is no relief for it, *no healing of thy bruise*, no possibility that the wound which is so grievous and painful to thee, should be so much as skinned over; thy case is desperate, *ver. 19.* and thy neighbours, instead of lending a hand to help thee, shall *clap their hands over thee*, and triumph in thy fall; and the reason is, because thou hast been one way or other injurious to them all; *upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?* Thou hast been always doing mischief to those about thee, there is none of them, but what thou hast abused and insulted, and therefore they shall be so far from pitying thee, that they shall be glad to see thee reckoned with. Note, Those that have been abusive to their neighbours, it will, one time or other, come against them; they are but preparing enemies to themselves against their day comes to fall: and those that dare not lay hands on themselves, will *clap their hands over them*, and upbraid them with their former wickedness, for which they are now well enough served, and paid in their own coin. *The troublers shall be troubled*, will be the burthen of many, as it is here the burthen of Nineveh.



A N

E X P O S I T I O N,

W I T H

P R A C T I C A L O B S E R V A T I O N S.

O F T H E

Prophecy of HABAKKUK.

It is a very foolish fancy of some of the Jewish Rabbins, that this prophet was the son of the Shunamite woman, that was at first miraculously given, and afterwards raised to life by Elisha, 2 Kings iv. as they say also, the prophet Jonah was the son of the widow of Zarephath, which Elijah raised to life. It is a more probable conjecture of their modern chronologers, that he lived and prophesied in the reign of king Manasseh, when wickedness abounded, and destruction was hastening on; destruction by the Chaldeans, whom this prophet mentions as the instruments of God's judgments; and Manasseh was himself carried to Babylon, as an earnest of what should come afterwards. In the apocryphal story of Bel and the Dragon, mention is made of Habakkuk the prophet in the land of Judah, that was carried thence by an angel to Babylon, to feed Daniel in the den; those who give credit to that story take pains to reconcile our prophet's living before the captivity, and foretelling it, with that; Huëtius thinks that was another of the same name, a prophet, this of the tribe of Simeon, that of Levi; others, that he lived so long as to the end of the captivity, tho' he prophesied of it before it came. And some have imagined that Habakkuk's feeding Daniel in the den, is to be understood mystically, that Daniel then lived by faith, as Habakkuk had said the just should do; He was fed by that word, Hab. ii. 4. The prophecy of this book is a mixture of the prophet's addresses to God in the people's name, and to the people in God's name: for it is the office of the prophets, to carry messages both ways. And we have in it a lively representation of the intercourse and communion that there is between a gracious God and a gracious soul. The whole particularly refers to the invasion of the land of Judah by the Chaldeans, which brought spoil upon the people of God, a just punishment of the spoil they had been guilty of among themselves: but it is of general use, especially to help us through the great temptation with which good men have in all ages been exercised, arising from the power and prosperity of the wicked, and the sufferings of the righteous by it.

C H A P. I.

In this chapter, (1.) The prophet complains to God, of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice, among his own people, and the hardships thereby put upon many good people, ver. 1—4. (2.) God by him foretels the punishment of that abuse of power, by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them, ver. 5—11. (3.) Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevail so far, ver. 12—17. So that he scarce knows which is

more to be lamented, the sin or the punishment of it, for in both, many harmless, good people are very great sufferers: it is well there is a day of judgment, and a future state before us, in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

1. **T**HE burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. 2. O LORD, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and

and thou wilt not save! 3. Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are *that* raise up strife and contention. 4. Therefore the law is slack, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

No more is told us in the title of this book, which we have, *ver. 1.* but that the penman was a prophet, a man divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough, if that be, so we need not ask concerning his tribe or family, or place of his birth; and that the book itself is *the burthen* which he saw; he was as sure of the truth of it, as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes, already accomplished.

Here, in these verses, the prophet sadly laments the *iniquity of the times*, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint, which he here makes to God.

1. That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side, had what he had a mind to, tho' he had no right on his side: the land was full of violence, as the old world was, *Gen. vi. 11.* The prophet cries out of violence, *ver. 2.* Iniquity and grievance, spoil and violence. In families and among relations, in neighbourhoods and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour, so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him, in losing times it fared best with those that had *nothing to lose*; but it grieved him to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed. Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who sigh and cry for abominations of this kind. He complains, *ver. 4.* that the wicked doth compass about the righteous: one honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting it on every side, many wicked men in confederacy against it, do run it down; nay, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various arts of mischief, sets upon a righteous man, that he perfectly besets him.

2. That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace, *there are that raise up strife and contention*, *ver. 3.* that foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men against one another, and sow discord among brethren, by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the sparks that were hid under the embers. And if blessed be the peace-makers, cursed are such peace-breakers, that make parties, and so make mischief that spreads further, and lasts longer than they can imagine. It is sad to see ill men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

3. That the torrent of violence and strife run so strong, as to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws, and the administration of justice, *ver. 4.* Because God did not appear against them, no body else would, *therefore the law is slack*, is silent, it breathes not, its pulse beats not, (so, it is said, the word signifies) it intermits, and judgment doth not go forth as it should, no cognizance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nay, wrong judgment proceedeth, if appeals be made to the courts of equity, the righteous shall be condemned, and the wicked justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease. The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law, for the obviating of those growing, threatening, mischiefs; the executive power, takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made: the stream of justice is dried up by violence, and has not its free course.

4. That all this was open and publick, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains, that this iniquity was shewed him, he beheld it which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it; *spoiling and violence are before me.* Note, The abounding of wickedness in a nation, is a very great eye-sore to good people, and if they did not see it, they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind, which he saw under the sun; and the prophet would therefore gladly turn hermit, that he might not see it, *Jer. ix. 2.* But then must we needs go out of the world, which therefore we should long to do, that we may remove to that world, where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

5. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress of those grievances; Lord, saith he, why dost thou show me iniquity? Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Mesek and Kedar? I cry to thee of this violence, I cry

loud, I have cried long, but thou wilt not hear, thou wilt not save, thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thine arm were shorted, or thine ear heavy. When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, they have cleansed their hearts in vain, *Psal. lxxiii. 13.* and hardens those in their impiety, who say, *God hath forsaken the earth.* We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far, and prosper long; God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprovings of bad men, and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, tho' we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say he is wise, and righteous, and good in all; and must believe the day will come, tho' it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong, and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

5. ¶ Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you. 6. For lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs. 7. They are terrible and dreadful: their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. 8. Their horses also are swifter than the leopards, and are more fierce than the evening wolves: and their horsemen shall spread themselves, and their horsemen shall come from far, they shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat. 9. They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east-wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand. 10. And they shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: they shall deride every strong hold, for they shall heap dust and take it. 11. Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance, that tho' God bore long, he would not bear always, with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must tell them so, that they might by repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

1. The preamble to the sentence is very awful, *ver. 5.* Behold ye among the heathen, and regard. Since they will not be brought to repentance by the long-suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No resentments are so keen, so deep, as those of abused patience. The Lord will inflict upon them, (1.) A publick punishment, which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbour nations shall take notice of, and stand amazed at, see *Deut. xxix. 24, 25.* This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world. (2.) An amazing punishment, so strange and surprizing, and so much out of the common road of providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be forer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not: nay, it shall not be credited, even by those that had the prediction of it from God, before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it, when it is come; you will not believe it, tho' it be told you; it will be thought incredible, that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur, to enforce and aggravate it: that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken; and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant, and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people, cannot but be the astonishment of all about them. (3.) A speedy punishment, I will work a work in your days; now quickly; this generation shall not pass, till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days, shall be reckoned for in your days, for now the measure of the iniquity is full, *Mat. xxiii. 36.* (4.) It shall be a punishment, in which much of the hand of God shall appear; it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, this is the Lord's doing; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands, wo to those whom he takes to task. (5.) It shall be such a punishment, as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his gospel, for to that these words are applied, *Acts xiii. 41.* Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish. The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, for their idolatry, was a figure of their ruin by the Romans, for rejecting Christ and his gospel, and it is a very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?

2. The sentence it self is very dreadful and particular, *ver. 6. Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans.* There were those that raised up a great deal of *strife and contention* among them, which was their sin, and now God will raise up the Chaldeans against them, who shall *strive and contend* with them, which shall be their punishment. Note, When God's professing people quarrel among themselves, snarl at, and devour one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them, that shall make peace by making an universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came, and *took away their place and nation.* The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, who, tho' themselves acting unrighteously, yet shall *execute the righteousness of the Lord*, and punish the unrighteousness of Israel. Now here we have,

1. A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them. (1.) They are *a bitter and hasty nation*, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury; they are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and push on with resolution in their enterprizes; they shew no mercy, and they spare no pains. Miserable is the case of those, that are given up into the hand of these *cruel ones.* (2.) They are strong, and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from, *ver. 7. They are terrible and dreadful*, famed for the gallant troops they bring into the field, *ver. 8. Their horses are swifter than leopards* to charge and pursue, and *more fierce than the evening-wolves*; and *wolves* are observed to be most ravenous towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness, under the protection of which, *all the beasts of the forest creep forth*, Psal. civ. 10. Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous, *their horsemen shall spread themselves* a great way, for they shall *come from far*, from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it, and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And *in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey*, as those, *Isa. viii. 1. marg.* for they shall *fly as the eagle* towards the earth, when she *hasteth to eat*, and strikes at the prey she has an eye upon. (3.) Their own will is a law to them, and in the fierceness of their pursuits, they will not be governed by any laws of humanity, equity, or honour. *Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves*, *ver. 7.* Appetite and passion rule them, and not reason or conscience: their principle is, *Quicquid libet, licet, and sic volo, sic jubeo, stat pro ratione voluntas.* What favour can be hoped for, from such an enemy? Note, Those that have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom *the law is slackened, and judgment doth not go forth*, will justly be paid in their own coin, and fall into the hands of those, that will deal unjustly and unmercifully with them.

2. A prophecy of the terrible execution, that should be made, by this terrible nation. *They shall march through the breadth of the earth*, so it may be read, for in a little time, the Chaldean forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they over-ran Asia and part of Africa. Or, Through the breadth of *the land of Israel*, which was wholly laid waste by them. It is here foretold, (1.) That they shall seize all as their own, that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to *possess the dwelling places that are not theirs*, which they have no right to, but that which their sword gives them. (2.) That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour; *They shall all come for violence*, *ver. 9.* not to determine any disputed right, by the sword, but, right or wrong, to enrich themselves with the spoil. *Their faces shall sup up as the east-wind*; their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful, that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall *swallow up all*, as the *east-wind* nips and blasts the buds and flowers. *Their faces shall look towards the east*, so some read it; they shall still have an eye to their own country, which lay eastward from Judea, and all the spoil they seize, they shall remit thither. (3.) That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon: *They shall gather the captivity as the sand* for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had. (4.) That they shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them, *ver. 10.* Do the distressed Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their conduct and courage to give check to the victorious arms of the Chaldeans? Alas, they will make nothing of them. *They shall scoff* (he shall, so it is in the original, meaning Nebuchadnezzar, who, being puffed up with his successes, shall scoff) *at the kings and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him, and the princes shall be a scorn to them, so unequal a match shall they appear to be.* Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? *He shall deride every strong hold*, for to him it shall be *weak*, and he shall *heap dust and take it*; a little soil, thrown up for ramparts, shall serve to give him all the advantage against them, that he can desire; he shall make but a jest of them, and a sport of taking them. (5.) By all this he shall be puffed up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction, *ver. 11. Then shall his mind change*, for the worse. The spirit both of the people and of the king, shall grow more

haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights, neither will they be content, when they have made themselves masters of other peoples rights too; but as the condition riseth, the mind riseth too: this victorious king, shall *pass over all the bounds of reason, and equity, and modesty, and break thro' all their bonds, and thereby he shall offend*, shall make God his enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself, by *imputing this his power to his god*, whereas he had it from the God of Israel: Bel and Nebo were the gods of the Chaldeans, and to them they gave the glory of their successes; were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued, that because they had conquered Israel, their gods were too strong for the God of Israel. Note, It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped they will *change their minds* and grow *better*, and ripen for deliverance, and they did so. However, their enemies will *change their minds* and grow worse, and ripen for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time, for a haughty spirit lifted up against God, *goes before a fall.*

12. ¶ *Art thou not from everlasting, O LORD my God, mine holy One?* we shall not die: O LORD, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?* 14. And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things that have no ruler over them? 15. They take up all of them with the angle: they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag; therefore they rejoyce and are glad. 16. Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag: because by them their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous. 17. Shall they therefore empty their net, and not spare continually to slay the nations?

The prophet having received of the Lord that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresseth himself to him, for the ease of his own mind under the burden which he saw. And still he is full of complaints: If he look about him, he sees nothing but *violence done by Israel*, if he look before him, he sees nothing but *violence done against Israel*, and it is hard to say which is the more melancholy sight; his thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord: It is our duty to be affected both with the iniquities and with the calamities of the church of God, and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed, lest we grow *peevish* in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or lose the comfort of our communion with him. The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to *make the best of it*, must be ourselves *better*, and long for the *better world*. The prospect of the prevalency of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. And in his plea, we may observe,

1. The truths he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends, under the growing, threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations, for our support in the like case.

(1.) However it be, yet God is *the Lord, our God, and our holy One*. The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them, that the *God of Israel is the true God, the living God*, Jer. x. 10, 11. (1.) He is Jehovah, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection; *our rock* is not *as theirs*. (2.) He is *my God*. He speaks in the peoples name, every Israelite may say, he is *mine*; though we are thus sore broken, and *all this is come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God*, nor quitted our relation to him, yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, Psal. xlv. 17. We are an offending people, he an offending God, yet he is *ours*, and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him, or of his service, for all this. (3.) He is *my holy One*; which intimates, that the prophet loved God, as a holy God, loved him for the sake of his holiness; he is *mine*, because he is a *holy One*; and therefore he will be my Sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is *my holy One*. Men are *unholy*, but *my God is holy*.

(2.) Our God is *from everlasting*. This he pleads with him, *Art not thou from everlasting, O Lord, my God?* It is matter of great and continual comfort to God's people, under the troubles

of this present life, that their God is *from everlasting*: Which speaks, (1.) The eternity of his nature; if he is *from everlasting*, he will be *to everlasting*, and we must have recourse to this first principle, when *things seen*, that are *temporal* are discouraging, that we have hope and help sufficient, in a God that is *not seen*, that is *eternal*. Art thou not from everlasting, and then wilt thou not make bare thine everlasting arm, in pursuance of thine everlasting counsels, to make unto thy self an everlasting name? (2.) The antiquity of his covenant. Art thou not *from of old*, a God in covenant with thy people, so some understand it; and hast thou not done great things for them *in the days of old*, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of: and art thou not the same God still, that ever thou wast? Thou art God, and changeest not.

(3.) While the world stands, God will have a church in it. Thou art *from everlasting*, and then *we shall not die*: The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, tho' it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles, 2 Cor. vi. 9. *chastened and not killed; chastened sore, but not delivered over to death*, Psal. cxviii. 18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church, from the eternity of God; for Christ hath said, *Because I live*, and therefore, as long as I live, *ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19. He is the rock, on which the church is so firmly built, that the *gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. We shall not die*.

(4.) Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends. *Thou hast ordained them, thou hast established them*; it was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel, but what was *given them from above*. He gave them their commission *to take the spoil and to take the prey*, Isa. x. 6. Herein God appears a *mighty God*, that the power of *mighty men* is derived from him, and depends upon him, and is under his check; he saith concerning it, *hitherto shall it come and no further*. They whom God *ordains* shall do no more than what God has *ordained*, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people; men are God's hand, the rod in his hand, Psal. xvii. 14. And he hath *ordained them for judgment, and for correction*; God's people need correction, and deserve it, they must expect it, they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction that they may be *ruined*, but for their correction that they may be *reformed*; they are not intended for a sword to cut them off, but a rod to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, tho' they *mean not so, neither doth their heart think so*, Isa. x. 7. Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure *his counsel shall stand*.

(5.) Tho' the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and doth not approve of that wickedness, ver. 13. *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*. The prophet observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say, that it was vain to serve God, and indifferent to him what men were; but he soon suppresses the thought by having recourse to his first principle, that God is not, that he cannot, be the author or patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is *of purer eyes than to behold it*, with any allowance or approbation: No, It is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*: He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an *offence to him*, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are thereby made obnoxious to his justice: there is in the nature of God, an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and tho' an expedient is happily found out, for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will, or can be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, tho' the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's *connivance* at sin, must never be interpreted his giving *countenance* to it; for *he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*, Psal. v. 4, 5. The *iniquity*, which it is here said God doth not *look upon*, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people, by their persecutors; tho' God sees cause to permit it, yet he doth not approve of it: so it agrees with that of Balaam, Numb. xxiii. 21. *He hath not beheld iniquity against Jacob*, nor *seen*, with allowance, *perverseness against Israel*; which is very comfortable to the people of God in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; tho' the instruments of their trouble hate them, it doth not therefore follow that God doth; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he doth correct them.

2. The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths; since we are sure thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptation given them to question whether thou art so or no? *Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans, that deal treacherously with thy people*, and givest them success in their attempts upon us? Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies that blaspheme thy name to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously, with thy sworn subjects, that desire to fear thy name? What shall we

say to this? This was a temptation to Job, chap. xxi. 7.—xxiv. 1. To David, Psal. lxxiii. 2, 3. To Jeremiah, chap. xii. 1, 2.

1. That God permitted sin, and was patient with the sinners. He *looked upon them*, he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain or punish them; but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his *looking upon them* intimates, that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them, and favoured them. He *held his tongue*, when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence*.

2. That his patience was abused, and because *sentence* against these evil works and workers, was *not executed speedily*, therefore *their hearts were the more fully set in them to do evil*.

1. They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal *treacherously*: under colour of peace and friendship they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

2. They hated and persecuted men, because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel, because *his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous*. *The wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he*, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill will to the image of God, and therefore devour good men, because they bear that image. Tho' many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves, and worse, yet there were those among them, that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

3. They make no more of *killing men* than of *catching fish*; the prophet complains, that providence having delivered up the weaker to be a prey to the stronger, they were in effect made as *the fishes of the sea*, ver. 14. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another, as the greater fishes do upon the lesser, ver. 3. and they were made so to the common enemy. They were *as the creeping things*, or *swimming things*, for the word is used for *fish*, Gen. i. 20. *that have no ruler over them*, either to restrain them from devouring one another, or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans, as fish to the fishermen: those proud oppressors *make no conscience* of killing them, no more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They *make no difficulty* of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pains to take them. They *make no distinction* among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own, that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they *take up with the angle*, ver. 15. one by one; others they *catch in sholes*, and by wholesale *in their net*, and *gather them in their drag*, their *inclosing net*. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

4. They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it, tho' it was got dishonestly. *Their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous*, they prosper in their oppression and fraud, they have a great deal, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it: And therefore, (1.) They have a great *complacency* in themselves, and are very *pleasant*, they live merrily, ver. 15. *Therefore they rejoice and are glad*, because their wealth is great, and their projects succeed, for the increase of it, Job xxxi. 25. *Soul, take thine ease*, Luke xii. 19. (2.) They have a great *conceit* of themselves, and are very much in love with themselves, and mighty admirers of their own ingenuity and conduct; they *sacrifice to their own net*, and *burn incense to their own drag*: they applaud themselves for having got so much money, tho' never so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us, to take the glory of our outward prosperity to our selves, and to say, *My might, and the power of my hands, has gotten me this wealth*, Deut. viii. 17. And this is *idolizing* our selves, sacrificing to the *drag-net*, because it is *our own*, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry, as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus, is because by it *their portion is fat*. They that make a god of their money will make a god of their *drag-net*, if they can but get money by it.

Lastly, The prophet in the close, humbly expresseth his hope, that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind, always to go on and prosper thus, and expostulates with God concerning it, ver. 17. *Shall they therefore empty their net? Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again, to catch more? And wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations? And will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain*

maintain that? The prophet lodgeth the matter in God's hand, and leaves it with him, as the psalmist doth, *Psal. lxxiv. 22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.*

C H A P. II.

In this chapter we have an answer expected by the prophet, ver. 1. and returned by the Spirit of God, to the complaints which the prophet made of the violences and victories of the Chaldeans in the close of the foregoing chapter. The answer is, (1.) That after God hath served his own purposes by the prevailing power of the Chaldeans, has tried the faith and patience of his people, and distinguished between the hypocrites and the sincere among them, he will reckon with the Chaldeans, will humble and bring down, not only that proud monarch Nebuchadnezzar, but that proud monarchy, for their boundless and insatiable thirst after dominion and wealth, for which they themselves should at length be made a prey, ver. 2—8. (2.) That not they only, but all other sinners like them, should perish under a divine wo. (1.) Those that are covetous, are greedy of wealth and honours, ver. 9, 11. (2.) Those that are injurious and oppressive, and raise estates by wrong and rapine, ver. 12—14. (3.) Those that promote drunkenness, that they may expose their neighbours to shame, ver. 15—17. (4.) Those that worship idols, ver. 18—20.

1. **I** Will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov'd. 2. And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. 4. Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

Here, 1. The prophet humbly gives his attendance upon God, ver. 1. *I will stand upon my watch*, as a centinel on the walls of a besieged city, or in the borders of an invaded country, that is very solicitous to gain intelligence; I will look up, will look round, will look within, and watch to see what he will say unto me, will listen attentively to the words of his mouth, and carefully observe the steps of his providence, that I may not lose the least hint of instruction or direction. *I will watch to see what he will say in me*, so it may be read, what the Spirit of prophecy in me, will dictate to me, by way of answer to my complaints. And even in an ordinary way, God not only speaks to us by his word, but speaks in us by our own consciences, whispering to us, *this is the way, walk in it*; and we must attend to the voice of God in both. The prophet's standing upon his tower, or high-place, speaks his prudence, in making use of the helps and means he had within his reach to know the mind of God, and to be instructed concerning it. Those that expect to hear from God, must withdraw from the world, and get above it, must raise their attention, fix their thought, study the scriptures, consult experiences and the experienced, and continue instant in prayer, and thus set themselves upon the tower. His standing upon his watch, speaks his patience, his constancy and resolution, he will wait the time, and weather the point as a watchman doth, but he will have an answer; he will know what God will say to him, not only for his own satisfaction, but to enable him as a prophet, to give satisfaction to others, and answer their exceptions when he is reprov'd or argued with. Herein the prophet is an example to us. (1.) When we are tossed and perplexed with doubts concerning the methods of providence, are tempted to think it is fate or fortune, and not a wise God, that governs the world, or that the church is abandoned, and God's covenant with his people cancelled and laid aside; then we must take pains to furnish ourselves with considerations proper to clear this matter; we must stand upon our watch against the temptation, that it may not get ground upon us; must set ourselves upon the tower, to see if we can discover that which will silence the temptation, and solve the objected difficulties; must do as the psalmist, *consider the days of old*, and make a diligent search, *Psal. lxxvii. 6. must go into the sanctuary of God*, and there labour to understand the end of these things, *Psal. lxxvii. 17. we must not give way to our doubts, but struggle to make the best of our way out of them. (2.) When we have been at prayer, pouring out our complaints and requests before God, we must carefully observe what answers God gives by his word, his Spirit, and his providences, to our humble representations: When David saith, *I will direct my prayer unto thee*, as an arrow to the mark, he adds, *I will look up*, will look after my prayer, as a man doth after the arrow he hath shot, *Psal. v. 3. must hear what God**

the Lord will speak, *Psal. lxxxv. 8. (3.) When we go to read and hear the word of God, and so to consult the lively oracles, we must set ourselves to observe what God will thereby say unto us to suit our case, what word of conviction, caution, counsel, and comfort he will bring to our souls, that we may receive it, and submit to the power of it; and may consider what we shall answer, what returns we shall make to the word of God when we are reprov'd by it. (4.) When we are attacked by such as quarrel with God and his providence, as the prophet here seems to have been, beset, besieged as in a tower, by hosts of objectors, we should consider how to answer them, fetch our instructions from God, hear what he saith to us for our satisfaction, and have that ready to say to others, when we are reprov'd, to satisfy them, as a reason of the hope that is in us, 1 Pet. iii. 15. and beg of God a mouth and wisdom, and that it may be given us in that same hour, what we shall speak.*

2. God graciously gives him the meeting; for he will not disappoint the believing expectations of his people; that wait to hear what he will say unto them; but will speak peace, will answer them with good words and comfortable words, *Zech. i. 13.* The prophet had complained of the prevalency of the Chaldeans which God had given him a prospect of, now to pacify him concerning it, he here gives him a further prospect of their fall and ruin; as Isaiah before this, when he had foretold the captivity in Babylon; foretold also the destruction of Babylon. Now this great and important event, being made known to him by a vision, care is taken to publish the vision, and transmit it to the generations to come, who should see the accomplishment of it.

1. The prophet must write the vision, ver. 2. Thus when St John had a vision of the New Jerusalem, he was ordered to write, *Rev. xxi. 5.* He must write it, that he might imprint it on his own mind, and make it more clear to himself; but especially, that it might be notified to those in distant places, and transmitted to those in future ages: What is handed by tradition is easily mistaken, and liable to corruption, but what is written is reduced to a certainty, and preserved safe and pure. We have reason to bless God for written visions, that God has written to us the great things of his prophets, as well as of his law. He must write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, must write it legibly, in large characters, so that he that runs may read it, that those who will not allow themselves leisure to read it deliberately, may not avoid a cursory view of it. Probably the prophets were wont to write some of the most remarkable of their predictions in tables, and to hang them up in the temple, *Isa. viii. 1.* Now the prophet is bid to write this very plain. Note, Those that are employed in preaching the word of God, should study plainness, as much as may be, so as to make them intelligible to the meanest capacities. The things of our everlasting peace, which God has written to us, are made plain, they are all plain to him that understandeth, *Prov. viii. 9.* and they are published with authority; God himself has prefixed his imprimatur to them; he hath said, *make them plain.*

2. The people must wait for the accomplishment of the vision, ver. 3. The vision is yet for an appointed time to come. You shall now be told of your deliverance by the breaking of the Chaldeans power, and that the time of it is fixed in the counsel and decree of God, there is an appointed time, but it is not near, it is yet to be deferred a great while; and that comes in here, as a reason why it must be written; that it may be reviewed afterwards, and the event compared with it. Note, God has an appointed time for his appointed work, and will be sure to do the work when the time comes; and it is not for us to anticipate his appointments, but to wait his time. And it is a great encouragement to wait with patience, that though the promised favour be deferred long, it will come at last, and be an abundant recompence to us for our waiting. At the end it shall speak, and not lie; we shall not be disappointed of it, for it will come at the time appointed, nor shall we be disappointed in it, for it will fully answer our believing expectations. The promise may seem silent a great while, but at the end it shall speak; and therefore though it tarry longer than we expected, yet we must continue waiting for it; being assured it will come, and willing to tarry until it doth come. The day that God hath set for the deliverance of his people, and the destruction of his and their enemies, is a day, (1.) That will surely come at last; it is never adjourned sine die, but it will without fail come at the fixed time, and the fittest time. (2.) It will not tarry, for God is not slack, as some count slackness, 2 Pet. iii. 9. though it tarry past our time, yet it doth not tarry past God's time, which is always the best time.

3. This vision, the accomplishment of which is so long waited for, will be such an exercise of faith and patience, as will try and discover men what they are, ver. 4. (1.) There are some, who will proudly disdain this vision, whose hearts are so lifted up, that they scorn to take notice of it, if God will work for them presently, they will thank him, but they will not give him credit; their hearts are lifted up towards vanity, and since God puts them off, they will shift for themselves, and not be beholden to him; they think their own hands sufficient for them, and God's promise is to them an insignificant thing: That man's soul that is thus lifted up, is not upright in him; he is not right with God, is not as it should be. Those that either distrust or despise God's

God's all-sufficiency, will not walk *uprightly* with him, *Gen. xvii. 1.* But, (2.) Those that are truly good, and whose hearts are upright with God, will value the promise, and venture their all upon it; and in confidence of the truth of it, will keep close to God and duty, in the most difficult, trying times, and will then live comfortably in communion with God, dependence on him, and expectation of him. *The just shall live by faith, i. e. during the captivity, good people shall support themselves, and live comfortably by faith in these precious promises, while the performance of them is deferred. The just shall live by his faith, by that faith which he acts upon the word of God.* This is quoted in the New Testament, *Rom. i. 17. Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x.* for the proof of the great doctrine of justification by faith only, and of the influence which the grace of faith has upon the Christian life. Those that are made *just by faith, shall live, shall be happy here and for ever; and while they are here, they live by it, when they come to heaven, faith shall be swallowed up in vision.*

5. ¶ Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, *he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people:* 6. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a taunting proverb against him, and say, Wo to him that increaseth *that which is not his: how long?* and to him that ladeth himself with thick clay. 7. Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee, and awake that shall vex thee, and thou shalt be for booties unto them? 8. Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee: because of mens blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 9. ¶ Wo to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house, that he may set his nest on high, that he may be delivered from the power of evil. 10. Thou hast consulted shame to thy house, by cutting off many people, and hath sinned against thy soul. 11. For the stone shall cry out of the wall, and the beam out of the timber shall answer it. 12. ¶ Wo to him that buildeth a town with blood, and stablisheth a city by iniquity. 13. Behold, *is it not of the LORD of hosts, that the people shall labour in the very fire, and the people shall weary themselves for very vanity?* 14. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

The prophet having had orders to *write the vision*, and the people to wait for the accomplishment of it, the vision itself follows; and it is, as divers other prophecies we have met with, the burthen of Babylon, and Babylon's king; the same that was said to *pass over and offend*, chap. i. 11. It reads the doom some think of Nebuchadnezzar, who was principally active in the destruction of Jerusalem; or, of that monarchy, or of the whole kingdom of the Chaldeans, or of all such proud and oppressive powers, that bear hard upon any people, especially upon God's people. Observe,

1. The charge laid down against this enemy, upon which the sentence is grounded, *ver. 5.* The *lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life*, are the entangling snares of men, and great men especially; and we find him that led Israel captive, himself led captive by each of these. For, (1.) He is *sensual and voluptuous*, and given to his pleasures; *he transgresseth by wine*, drunkenness is itself a transgression, and is the cause of abundance of transgression. We read of those that *err through wine*, *Isa. xxviii. 7.* Belshazzar (in whom particularly this prophecy had its accomplishment) was in the height of his transgression by wine, when the hand-writing upon the wall, signed the warrant for his immediate execution, pursuant to this sentence, *Dan. v. 1.* (2.) He is *haughty and imperious*, he is a *proud man*, and his pride is a certain presage of his fall coming on. If great men be proud men, the great God will make them know he is above them. His *transgressing by wine* is made the cause of his arrogance and insolence, therefore *he is a proud man.* When a man is drunk, though he makes himself *as mean as a beast*, yet he thinks himself *as great as a king*, and *prides himself* in that by which he *shames himself.* We find the *crown of pride* upon the head of the *drunkards of Ephraim*, and a *wo* to both, *Isa. xxviii. 1.* (3.) He is *covetous and greedy* of wealth, and this is the effect of his pride; he thinks himself worthy to *enjoy all*, and therefore makes it his business to *engross all.* The Chaldean monarchy aimed to be an *universal one.* He *keepeth not at home*, is not content with his own, which he has an incontestable title to, but thinks it too little, and so enjoys it not,

nor takes the comfort he might in his own palace, in his own dominion; his sin is his punishment, and his ambition is perpetual uneasiness. Though the *home* be a *palace*, yet to a discontented mind it is a *prison.* He *enlargeth his desire as hell*, or *the grave* that daily receives the body of the dead, and yet still cries, *give, give;* he is *as death*, which continues to devour, and *cannot be satisfied.* Note, It is the sin and folly of many, that have a great deal of the wealth of this world, that they do not know when they have enough, but the more they have, the more they would have, and the more-eager they are for it. And it is just with God, that the desires that are *unsatiable*, should still be *unsatisfied;* it is the doom passed on those that *love silver*, that they shall never be *satisfied with it*, *Ezek. v. 10.* They that will not be content with their *allotments*, shall not have the comfort of their *achievements.* This proud prince is still *gathering to him all nations, and heaping to him all people*, invading their rights, seizing their properties, and they must not be, unless they will be *his*, and under his command. One nation will not satisfy him, unless he has another, and then another, and all at last; as those in a lower sphere, to gratify the same inordinate desire, lay *house to house, and field to field*, that they may be *placed alone in the earth*, *Isa. v. 8.* And it is hard to say which is more to be pitied; the folly of such ambitious princes, that place their honour in enlarging their dominions, and not in ruling them well, or, the misery of those nations that are harassed and pulled to pieces by them.

2. The sentence passed upon him, *ver. 6.* *Shall not all these take up a parable against him?* His doom is, (1.) That since *pride* has been his sin, *disgrace and dishonour* shall be his punishment, and he shall be loaded with contempt, shall be laughed at and despised by all about him; as those that look big and aim high, deserve to be, and commonly are, when they are brought down and baffled. (2.) That since he has been abusive to his neighbours, those very persons whom he has abused, shall be the instruments of his disgrace; *All these shall take up a taunting proverb against him.* They shall have the pleasure of insulting over him, and he the shame of being trampled upon by them.

Those that shall triumph in the fall of this great tyrant, are here furnished with a *parable* and a *taunting proverb*, to take up against him. *He shall say*, he that draws up the insulting ditty, shall say thus. *Ho, he that increaseth that which is not his; Aba,* what is gone with him now? So it may be read, in a taunting way. Or, *he shall say*, i. e. *the just that lives by his faith*, he to whom the vision is written and made plain, with the help of that, he shall say this; shall foretel the enemies *fall*, even when he sees him *flourishing*, and *suddenly curse his habitation*, even when he is *taking root*, *Job v. 3.* He shall indeed denounce *woes* against him.

1. Here is a *wo* against him, for increasing his own possessions, by invading his neighbour's rights, *ver. 6, 7, 8.* He *increaseth that which is not his*, but other peoples. Note, No more of what we have is to be reckoned *ours*, but what we came honestly by; nor will it long be *ours*, for *wealth gotten by vanity will be diminished.* Let not those that thrive in the world, be too forward to bless themselves in it, for if they do not *thrive lawfully*, they are under a *wo.* See here, (1.) What this prosperous prince is doing; he is *lading himself with thick clay.* Riches are but clay, thick clay; what is gold and silver but white and yellow earth. They that travel through *thick clay*, are both *retarded and dirtied* in their journey; so are they that go through the world in the midst of an abundance of the wealth of it; but as if that were not enough, what fools are they that *load themselves with it*, as if this trash would be their treasure. They burthen themselves with continual care about it, with a great deal of guilt in getting, saving, and spending it, and with a heavy account which they must give of it another day. They overload their ship with this *thick clay*, and so sink it and themselves *into destruction and perdition.* (2.) See what people say of him, while he is thus increasing his wealth; they cry, *How long? How long will it be ere he has enough?* They cry to God, how long wilt thou suffer this proud oppressor to trouble the nations? Or they say to one another, see *how long* it will last, how long he will be able to keep what he gets thus dishonestly. They dare not speak out, but we know what they mean, when they say, *how long?* (3.) See what will be in the end hereof; what he has got by violence from others, others shall take by violence from him. The Medes and Persians shall make a prey of the Chaldeans, as they had done of other nations, *ver. 7, 8.* There shall be those that will *bite thee*, and *vex thee*; they, from whom thou didst not fear any danger, that seemed *asleep*, shall *rise up and awake* to be a plague to thee. They shall rise up *suddenly*, when thou art most secure, and least prepared to receive the shock, and ward off the blow. *Shall they not rise up suddenly?* No doubt they shall, and thou thyself hast reason to expect it, to be dealt with as thou hast dealt with others; that *thou shalt be for booties unto them*, as others have been unto thee; that according to the law of retaliation, as *thou hast spoiled many nations*, so thou shouldst thyself be *spoiled*, *ver. 8.* *all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee*; the king of Babylon thought he had brought all the nations round about him so low, that none of them should have

have been able to make reprisals upon him; but, though they were but a *remnant of people*, a very few left, yet these shall be sufficient to *spoil him*, when God hath such a controversy with him, (1.) For *Mens blood*, and the thousands of lives, that have been sacrificed to his ambition and revenge, especially for the blood of Israelites, which is in a special manner precious to God. (2.) For the *violence of the land*, his laying waste so many countries, and destroying the fruits of the earth, especially in the land of Israel. (3.) For the *violence of the city*, the many cities that he had turned into ruinous heaps, especially Jerusalem, the holy city, and of *all that dwell therein*, who were ruined by him. Note, The violence done by proud men, to greaten and enrich themselves, will be called over again, and must be accounted for another day, by him to whom *vengeance belongs*.

2. Here is a wo against him, for coveting still more, and aiming to be still higher, *ver. 9, 10, 11*. The crime for which this wo is denounced, is much the same with that in the foregoing article, an insatiable desire of wealth and honour; it is *coveting an evil covetousness in his house*, i. e. grasping at an abundance for his family. Note, Covetousness is a very evil thing in a family; it brings disquiet and uneasiness into it, *he that is greedy of gain, troubles his own house*; and, which is worse, it brings the curse of God upon it, and upon all the affairs of it. *Wo to him that gaineth an evil gain*, so the margin reads it: There is a lawful gain, which by the blessing of God may be a comfort to a house, *a good man leaves an inheritance to his childrens children*; but what is got by fraud and injustice, is ill got, and will be ill gain, will not only do no good to a family, but will bring poverty and ruin upon it. Now observe,

(1.) What this covetous wretch aims at; it is *to set his nest on high*, to raise his family to some greater dignity than it had before arrived to; or to set it, as he apprehends, out of the reach of danger, that he may be *delivered from the power of evil*; that it may not be in the power of the worst of his enemies to do him a mischief, or so much as to disturb his repose. Note, It is common for men to pretend it as an excuse for their covetousness and ambition, that they only consult their own safety, and aim to secure themselves: And yet they do but deceive themselves, they think *their wealth* will be a *strong city* to them, and a *high wall*, for it is so only in *their own conceit*, *Prov. xviii. 10*.

(2.) What he will get by it. *Thou hast consulted*, not safety, but *shame to thy house*, by *cutting off many people*, *ver. 10*. Note, An estate raised by iniquity, is a scandal to a family. Those that *cut off*, or undermine others, to make room for themselves, that impoverish others, to enrich themselves, do but *consult shame to their houses*, and fasten upon them a mark of infamy. Yet that is not the worst of it, *thou hast sinned against thine own soul*, hast brought that under guilt and wrath, and endangered that. Note, Those that do wrong to their neighbour, do a much greater wrong to their own souls. But if the sinner pleads not guilty, and thinks he has managed his frauds and violence with so much art and contrivance, that they cannot be proved upon him; let him know, that if there be no other witnesses against him, *the stone shall cry out of the wall* against him, and the *beam out of the timber* in the roof shall answer it, shall second it, shall witness it, that the money and materials, wherewith he built the house, were unjustly gotten, *ver. 10*. The stones and timber cry to heaven for *vengeance*, as *the whole creation groans under the sin of man*, and waits to be delivered from that *bondage of corruption*.

3. Here is a wo against him, for building a town and a city by blood and extortion, *ver. 12*. He *builds a town*, and is himself lord of it, he *establisheth a city*, and makes it his royal seat, so Nebuchadnezzar did, *Dan. iv. 33*. *Is not this great Babylon that I have built, for the house of the kingdom?* But it is built *with the blood* of his own subjects, whom he has oppressed, and the blood of his neighbours whom he hath unjustly invaded; it is *established by iniquity*, by the unrighteous laws that are made for the security of it: *Wo to him that doth so*; for the towns and cities thus built, can never be established, they will fall, and their founders be buried in the ruins of them. Babylon that was built by *blood and iniquity*, did not continue long, its day soon came to fall; and then this wo took effect, when that prophecy, which is expressed as a history, (*Isa. xxi. 9*.) proved a history indeed, *Babylon is fallen, is fallen*. And the destruction of that city, was,

1. The *shame* of the Chaldeans, who had taken so much pains and were at such a vast expence to fortify it, *ver. 13*. *Is it not of the Lord of hosts, that the people* who have laboured so hard to defend that city, shall *labour in the very fire*, shall see the out-works, which they confided in the strength of, *set on fire*, and shall *labour in vain* to save them? Or, They in their pursuits of worldly wealth and honour, put themselves to a great fatigue, and ran a mighty hazard, as they that *labour in the fire* do. The worst that can be said of the labourers in God's vineyard, is, that *they have born the burden and heat of the day*, *Matth. xx. 12*. but those that are eager in their worldly pursuits *labour in the very fire*, make themselves perfect slaves to their lusts. There is not a greater drudge in the world, than he that is under the power of reigning covetousness. And what comes of it? Tho' they take a world of pains, they are but poorly paid for it, for after all, *they weary themselves for very vanity*, they were told it

was *vanity*, and when they find themselves disappointed of it, and disappointed in it, they will own it is worse than vanity, it is *vexation of spirit*.

2. It was the *honour* of God, as a God of impartial justice and irresistible power, for by the ruin of the Chaldean monarchy (which all the world could not but take notice of) *the earth was filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord*, *ver. 14*. *The Lord is known by these judgments which he executeth*; especially when he is pleased to *look upon proud men and abase them*, for he thereby proves himself to be *God alone*, *Job. xl. 11, 12*. See what good God brings out of the staining and sinking of earthly glory, he thereby *manifests and magnifies* his own glory, and *fills the earth* with the knowledge of it, as plentifully as the *waters cover the sea*, which lie deep, spread far, and shall not be dried up until time shall be no more. Such is the *knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*, given by the gospel, *2 Cor. iv. 6*. and such was the knowledge of *his glory*, by the miraculous ruin of Babylon. Note, Such as will not be taught the knowledge of God's glory, by the *judgments of his mouth*, shall be made to know and acknowledge it, by the *judgments of his hand*.

15. ¶ *Wo unto him that giveth his neighbour drink: that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness*. 16. Thou art filled with shame for glory: drink thou also, and let thy foreskin be uncovered: the cup of the LORD's right hand shall be turned unto thee, and shameful spewing shall be on thy glory. 17. For the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee: and the spoil of beasts which made them afraid because of mens blood, and for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein. 18. ¶ *What profiteth the graven image, that the maker thereof hath graven it; the molten image, and a teacher of lies, that the maker of his work, trusteth therein to make him dumb idols?* 19. Wo unto him that faith to the wood, Awake; to the dumb stone, Arise, it shall teach: behold, it is laid over with gold and silver, and there is no breath at all in the midst of it. 20. But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.

The three foregoing articles, upon which the woes here are grounded, are very near akin to each other: The criminals charged by them, are oppressors and extortioners, that raise estates by rapine and injustice, and it is mentioned here again, *ver. 17*. the very fame that was said, *ver. 8*. for that is the crime upon which the greatest stress is laid, it is *because of mens blood*, innocent blood, barbarously and unjustly shed, which is a provoking, crying thing, it is *for the violence of the land, of the city, and of all that dwell therein*, which God will certainly reckon for, sooner or later, as the asserter of right, and the avenger of wrong.

But here are two articles more of a different nature, which carry a wo, to all those in general to whom they belong, and particularly to the Babylonian monarchs, by whom the people of God were taken and held captives.

1. The *promoters of drunkenness*, stand here impeached and condemned. Belsazzar was one of those, he was so remarkably, that very night that the prophecy of this chapter was fulfilled in the period of his life and kingdom, when he *drank wine before a thousand* of his lords, *Dan. v. 1*. began the healths, and forced them to pledge him. And perhaps it was one reason why the succeeding monarchs of Persia made it a law of their kingdom, that *in drinking none should compel, but they should do according to every man's pleasure*, as we find, *Ezth. i. 8*. because they had seen, in the kings of Babylon, the mischievous consequences of forcing healths, and making people drunk. But the wo here stands firm and very fearful, against all those, whoever they be, that at any time are guilty of this sin; and in any place, from the stately palace (where that was) to the paltry ale-house. Observe,

(1.) Who the *sinner* is, that is here *articled against*; it is he that *makes his neighbour drunk*, *ver. 15*. To *give a neighbour drink* that is in want, that is thirsty and poor, though it be but a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple; to give drink to a weary traveller; nay, and to give strong drink to him that is ready to perish, and wine to them that are of heavy heart, is a piece of charity which is required of us, and shall be recompensed to us, *I was thirsty, and you gave me drink*: But, to *give a neighbour drink* that has enough already, and more than enough, with design to intoxicate him, that he may expose himself, may talk foolishly and make himself ridiculous, may disclose his own privacies, or be drawn in to agree to an ill bargain for himself, this is abominable wickedness, and those that are guilty of it, that make a practice of it, and take a pride and pleasure in it, are rebels against God in heaven, and his sacred laws, factors for the devil in hell and his cursed interests, and enemies to men on earth, and their honour and welfare: They are like the son of Nebat, that *sinned and made Israel to sin*. To entice others

to drunkenness, to *put the bottle to them*, that they may be allured to it, by its charms, by *looking on the wine when it is red, and gives its colour in the cup*; or, to *force* them to it, obliging them, by the rules of the club (and club-laws indeed they are) to drink so many glasses, and so filled, is to do what we can, and perhaps more than we know of, towards the murder both of soul and body: and those that do so, have a great deal to answer for.

(2.) What the sentence is, that is here passed upon him. There is a *wo* to him, *ver. 15.* and a punishment, *ver. 16.* that shall answer the sin. (1.) Doth he put the *cup of drunkenness* into the hand of his neighbour? the cup of fury, the cup of trembling, the *cup of the Lord's right hand*, shall be *turned unto him*; the power of God shall be armed against him: That cup which had gone round among the nations, to make them a *desolation, an astonishment, and a hissing*, which had made them stumble and fall, so that they could *rise no more*, shall at length be put into the hand of the king of Babylon, as was foretold, *Jer. xxv. 15, 16, 18, 26, 27.* Thus the New Testament Babylon, which had made the nations drunk with the cup of her fornications, shall have blood given her to drink, *for she is worthy*, *Rev. xviii. 3, 6.* (2.) Doth he take a pleasure in putting his neighbour to shame? He shall himself be loaded with contempt: *Thou art filled with shame for glory, with shame instead of glory*, or art filled now with *shame*, more than ever thou wast with *glory*; and the glory thou hast been filled with, shall but serve to make thy shame the more grievous to thyself, and the more ignominious in the eyes of others. Thou also shalt drink of the cup of trembling, and shalt *expose thyself* by thy fear and cowardise, which shall be, as the *uncovering of thy nakedness* to thy shame; and all about thee shall load thee with disgrace, for *shameful spewing shall be on thy glory*; on that which thou hast most prided thyself in, thy dignity, wealth and dominion; those whom thou hast made drunk, shall themselves spew upon it. For, *ver. 17. the violence of Lebanon shall cover thee, and the spoil of beasts*, i. e. thou shalt be hunted and run down with as much *violence* as ever any wild beasts in Lebanon were, shalt be *spoiled* as they are, and thy fall made a sport of; for thou art as one of the beasts that *made them afraid*, and therefore they triumph when they have got the mastery of thee. Or, It is because of the violence thou hast done Lebanon, i. e. the land of Israel, *Deut. iii. 25.* and the temple, *Zech. xi. 1.* that God now reckons with thee; that is the sin that now covers thee.

2. The promoters of idolatry stand here impeached and condemned; and this also was a sin that Babylon was notoriously guilty of; it was the *mother of harlots*; Belshazzar in his revels *praised his idols*. And for this here is a *wo* against them, and in them, against all others that do likewise, particularly the New Testament Babylon. Now see here,

1. What they do to *promote idolatry*, they are *mad upon their idols*, so the Chaldeans are said to be, *Jer. l. 38.* For, (1.) They have a great variety of idols, their graven images, and molten images, that people may take their choice which they like best. (2.) They are very nice and curious in the framing of them, the maker of the work has plaid his part admirably well, the fashioner of his fashion, so it is in the margin, that contrived the model in the most significant manner. (3.) They are at great expence in beautifying and adorning them, *they lay them over with gold and silver*; because they are things people love and dote upon wherever they meet with them, they dress up their idols in them, the more effectually to court the adoration of the children of this world. (4.) They have great expectations from them. The maker of the work trusteth therein as his god, puts a confidence in it, and gives honour to it as his god. The worshippers of God give honour to him, by offering up their prayers to him, and waiting to receive instructions and directions from him; and these honours they give to their idols, (1.) They pray to them, *they say to the wood, Awake for our relief, awake to hear our prayers*; and to the dumb stone, *Arise and save us*, as the church prays to her God, *Awake, O Lord, arise*, *Psal. xlv. 23.* They own their image to be a god by praying to it. Deliver me, for thou art my God, *Isa. xlv. 17. Deus qui rogat ille facit.* (2.) They consult them as oracles, and expect to be directed and dictated to by them; *they say to the dumb stone*, though it cannot speak, *yet it shall teach.* What the wicked demon, or no less wicked priest, speaks to them from the image, they receive with the utmost veneration, as of divine authority, and are ready to be governed by it. Thus is idolatry planted and propagated, under the specious shew of religion and devotion.

2. How the extreme folly of this is exposed. God by Isaiah when he foretold the deliverance of his people out of Babylon, largely shewed the shameful stupidity and sottishness of idolaters, and so he doth here by the prophet on the like occasion. (1.) Their images when they have made them are but *meer matter*, which is the meanest, lowest rank of being, and all the expence they are at upon them, cannot advance them one step above that; they are wholly void both of sense and reason, lifeless and speechless; it is a *dumb idol*, a *dumb stone*, and there is *no breath at all in the midst of it*, so that the most minute animal that has but breath and motion, is more excellent than they. They have not so much as the spirit of a beast. (2.) It is not in their power to do their worshippers any good, *ver. 8. What profiteth the graven image?* Tho' it be meer matter, if it were

cast into some other form, it might be serviceable to some purpose or other of human life, but as it is *made a god of*, it is of no profit at all, nor can do its worshippers the least kindness. Nay, (3.) It is so far from profiting them, that it puts a cheat upon them, and keeps them under the power of a *strong delusion*, they say, *it shall teach*, but it is a *teacher of lyes*; for it represents God as having a body, as being finite, visible, and dependent; whereas he is a spirit, infinite, invisible, and independent; and confirms those that become vain in their imaginations, in the false notions they have of God, and make the idea of God to be a precarious thing, and what every man pleaseth; if we may say to the *works of our hands, ye are our gods*, we may say so to any of the creatures of our own fancy, tho' the chimera be never so extravagant. An image is a *doctrine of vanities*, it is *falsehood*, and a *work of errors*, *Jer. x. 8, 13, 15.* It is therefore easy to see what their religion is, and what they aim at, who recommend those teachers of lyes, as *lay-mens books*, which they are to study, and govern themselves by, when they have locked up from them, the book of the scriptures in an unknown tongue.

3. How the people of God triumph in him, and therewith support themselves, when the idolaters thus shame themselves, *ver. 20. But the Lord is in his holy temple.* (1.) Our rock is not as their rock, *Deut. xxxii. 31.* Theirs are dumb idols, ours is Jehovah, a living God, that is what he is, and not as theirs, what men please to make him. He is in his *holy temple* in heaven, the residence of his glory, where we have access to him in the way, not which we have invented, but which he himself hath instituted. Compare, *Psal. cxv. 3. But our God is in the heavens*, *Psal. xi. 4.* (2.) The multitude of their gods which they set up, and take so much pains to support, cannot thrust out our God, he is, and will be *in his holy temple still*, and glorious in holiness. They have laid waste his temple at Jerusalem, but he has a temple above, that is *out of the reach* of their rage and malice, but *within the reach* of his peoples faith and prayers. (3.) Our God will make *all the world silent before him*; will strike the idolaters as dumb as their idols, convicting them of their folly, and covering them with shame. He will silence the fury of the oppressors, and check their rage against his people. (4.) It is the duty of his people to attend him with *silent adorings*, *Psal. lxxv. 1.* and patiently wait for his appearing, to save them in his own way and time. Be still and know that he is God, *Zech. ii. 13.*

C H A P. III.

Still the correspondence is kept up between God and his prophet. In the first chapter, he spoke to God, then God to him, and then he to God again; in the second chapter, God spoke wholly to him by the Spirit of prophecy; now in this chapter, he speaks wholly to God by the Spirit of prayer, for he would not let the intercourse drop on his side, like a genuine son of Abraham, who returned not to his place, until God had left communing with him, *Gen. xviii. 33.* The prophet's prayer in this chapter is in imitation of David's psalms, for it is directed to the chief musician, and is set to musical instruments. The prayer is left upon record for the use of the church, and particularly of the Jews in their captivity, while they were waiting for their deliverance, promised by the vision in the foregoing chapter. (1.) He earnestly begs of God to relieve and succour his people in affliction, to hasten their deliverance, and to comfort them in the mean time, *ver. 2.* (2.) He calls to mind the experiences which the church formerly had of God's glorious and gracious appearances on her behalf, when he brought Israel out of Egypt through the wilderness to Canaan, and there many a time wrought wonderful salvations for them, *ver. 3—15.* (3.) He affects himself with a holy concern for the present troubles of the church, but encourageth himself and others to hope, that the issue will be comfortable and glorious at last, tho' all visible means fail, *ver. 16—19.*

1. A Prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Sigionoth. 2. O LORD, I have heard thy speech and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

This chapter is intituled a prayer of Habakkuk, it is a meditation with himself, an intercession for the church. Prophets were praying men, this prophet was so. He is a prophet and he shall pray for thee, *Gen. xx. 7.* and sometimes they prayed for those even whom they prophesied against. They that were intimately acquainted with the mind of God concerning future events, knew better than others how to order their prayers, and what to pray for, and in the foresight of troublous times, could lay up a stock of prayers that might then receive a gracious answer, and so be serving the church by their prayers, when their prophesying was over. This prophet had found God ready to answer his requests and complaints before, and therefore now repeats his applications to him. Because God hath inclined his ear to us, we must resolve that therefore we will call upon him as long as we live.